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PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

ON THE

SECOND ADVENT.

WORKS BY THE REV. HUGH WHITE.

TWENTY SERMONS,

PREACHED IN ST. MARY'S CHAPEL OF EASE.

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MEDITATIONS AND ADDRESSES,

CHIEFLY ON THE SUBJECT OF PRAYER.

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PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS

ON THE

SECOND ADVENT.

BY

THE REV. HUGH WHITE, A.M.

CURATE OF ST. MARY'S PARISH.

SECOND EDITION, CORRECTED.

DUBLIN

WILLIAM CURRY, JUN. AND COMPANY.

SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, AND CO. LONDON.

FRASER AND CO. EDINBURGH.

1836.

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Dublin: Printed by J. S. FOLDS, 5, Bachelor's-Walk.

P R E F A C E.

My object in undertaking this little work has been chiefly two-fold. First—In reference to those who, either from prejudiced alarm, excited by the very words “Second Advent,” (as if all discussion, connected with this event, was necessarily associated with heretical or enthusiastic opinions,) or from any other cause, have not hitherto sufficiently directed their thoughts to the all-important subject, of which this volume treats. It has been my desire to induce such individuals to examine, in an unprejudiced and prayerful spirit, the testimony of Scripture on the point, and to ascertain, from the careful and

devout perusal of its pages, what degree of prominence is given to the exhibition of the Second Advent of the Redeemer, in the development of the Gospel-scheme, and what practical purposes it is there represented as being designed to promote.

I cannot but feel convinced that the result of such an investigation, if carried on in a teachable frame of mind, and with humble dependence on the divine guidance of the Holy Spirit, will be the persuasion, that this glorious event has a station of peculiar prominence, and authority, assigned to it, in the scriptural exhibition of the Gospel—that it is intended to subserve the most important practical results, connected both with the believer's personal sanctification, and the spiritual welfare of the church of Christ—and that it possesses, as a stimulant to Christian watchfulness, patience, faithfulness, and zeal, in running his heaven-

ward race, some considerations of a peculiarly powerful, and a peculiarly attractive character, to a Christian's heart.

The second object I have had in view, has been to offer a few admonitory hints, in, (I trust,) an humble and affectionate spirit, to those faithful followers of the adorable Redeemer, who, while agreeing in their views of every doctrine essential to salvation, and in their grateful desire to glorify Him, who is precious to their souls, beyond all price, are constrained to differ in their interpretation of what is usually designated the millennarian scheme.

It has been my anxious wish, to warn them of some dangers, to which an excessive partiality for, or prejudice against, this scheme, seems peculiarly to expose them; to persuade them to dwell rather on the essential points, of primary importance, connected with the Saviour's glory, the church's welfare, and their own salvation,

about which they are all agreed, than on those disputable points, of such subordinate importance, about which they differ; and to concentrate their thoughts and energies, (so far as the subject of unfulfilled prophecy is concerned,) on the exhibition and enforcement of those grand general views, in connection with the second coming of the Son of God—the magnificent prospects of blessedness and glory, which it unfolds to the eye of faith—the animating motives to Christian devotedness and zeal, which it supplies—and the sublime incentives to holiness of heart, and life, which it enforces, with such peculiar solemnity of appeal, in which all the children of God are *alike* interested, and, as it were, identified together by this joint-participation of such precious promises, and such glorious hopes. While, therefore, they are united by *such* a bond of union, assuredly they should not allow any

difference of opinion on *any* speculative subject, in which the glory of their common Saviour is not vitally engaged, to interrupt for a moment the harmony of Christian love and Christian communion, which ought ever to subsist among all the members of the family of the redeemed.

Such being the object of this volume, it is manifest, that it will not supply to any zealous partizan, on either side of the much-controverted millennarian question, the smallest materials for obtaining a triumph over an opponent, as I have not attempted to establish any particular theory or system; but rather endeavoured to remind each of the two parties, how much, (on a subject, that seems purposely involved, as to its *precise* import, in great obscurity,) has been urged, both in the way of sound reasoning, and scriptural testimony, by the advocates of the system, from which they dissent—and what

reason, therefore, there is to state their own opinions, with caution and humility, and to treat those of their opponents with candor and respect.

I have also been desirous to persuade them ever to remember, that since the *practical* influences which the realized anticipation of the second coming of the Son of God is intended to exercise over the believer's heart, and life, whether in the way of sanctification or comfort, are, to so great an extent, independent of any peculiar views, as to the disputed points of the millennarian scheme, surely all who love the Lord Jesus Christ, in sincerity and truth, however constrained conscientiously to differ on these points, both may and ought to agree in habitually fixing their thoughts and desires on the glorious event itself—cherishing its fondly-anticipated approach, in their abiding recollection, as a most powerful stimulant to unceasing

vigilance, unwearied exertion, and uncompromising faithfulness, in their Divine Master's cause ; and, amidst all their trials and tribulations, looking forward, with patient expectation, and devout joy, to the arrival of *that* day, which will be to them, and all they love in Christ, the day of the full consummation of all their brightest hopes of the unutterable blessedness, which has been purchased for them, at the costly price of their Redeemer's infinitely-precious blood, and which, in all the fulness of its glory, will be bestowed upon them, in the day of His appearing !

I cannot conclude, without earnestly entreating the fervent prayers of every Christian reader of these pages, that the divine blessing may rest upon this humble effort to promote the object that should ever be dearest to the Christian's heart. May He, who can put honor on the weakest instrumentality, vouch-

safe, in His infinite condescension, to bless this little volume, as the means of leading even one careless sinner to seek for safety, peace, and happiness, where alone they can be found, beneath the shadow of a Saviour's cross ; advancing even one of His own faithful followers in more abiding watchfulness, and spiritual preparedness for the day of His manifestation, and more abundant meetness for the inheritance among the saints in light ; or persuading any of his believing people, whom difference of opinion, on millennarian subjects, has in the least degree alienated from each other, to lay aside all those unkindly feelings, which are so peculiarly unbecoming in the servants of *such* a Master, as the loving Saviour of mankind, and to walk together in love, treading in His footsteps, and maintaining, amidst all their diversities of speculative judgment in minor points, the unity of the Spirit, as fellow-heirs of the same glorious

inheritance, in the bond of brotherly affection, and heavenly peace. Should so great an honour be put on this little work, even in a single instance, while I will most unfeignedly rejoice, at having been made instrumental towards the accomplishment of such an object, to Him, to whom undividedly it is due, as the power and the blessing belong exclusively to Him, be ascribed with the deepest gratitude, all the glory, and all the praise !

LAUREL HILL, *January, 1836.*

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

	Page
Scriptural Testimony	1

CHAPTER II.

Scriptural Testimony continued	24
--	----

CHAPTER III.

Probable Reasons for the prominence given to this subject in Scripture	54
---	----

CHAPTER IV.

Probable Reasons continued	69
--------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER V.

Practical Reflections	87
---------------------------------	----

	Page
CHAPTER VI.	
Practical Reflections	106
CHAPTER VII.	
Practical Reflections	129
CHAPTER VIII.	
Practical Reflections	153
CHAPTER IX.	
Address to Millennarians	179
CHAPTER X.	
Address to Millennarians	197
CHAPTER XI.	
Address to Millennarians	210
CHAPTER XII.	
Address to Millennarians	224
CHAPTER XIII.	
Address to Anti-Millennarians	245
CHAPTER XIV.	
Concluding Address	256

CHAPTER I.

SCRIPTURAL TESTIMONY.

WHEN some important scriptural truth is seized upon by individuals, of an enthusiastic temperament, whose piety is sincere, but not sober—and in the constitution of whose mental system an ardent imagination preponderates over a sound judgment, many deplorable consequences, not merely to the individuals themselves, but also to the cause of divine truth, are the unavoidable result. Nor is it perhaps one of the least disastrous of those consequences, that, in the minds of many Christians, of a soberer cast of character, the unauthorized speculations of human reason are so closely associated—I should rather say, identified, with the revealed doctrines of divine truth that the latter are unjustly involved in all the suspicion and censure, which the former deservedly incur. And thus the incrustation of human error is the cause,

not merely of the beauty of the divine truth which it covers, being concealed, and its form disfigured, but even of the truth itself being altogether neglected as unprofitable, if not condemned as injurious, to the very cause, of which, (when properly understood,) it would be found to be at once an ornament and support.

It is from this habit of identifying the errors of human exposition with the truth of divine revelation, that many have been led to regard, with suspicion and dislike, the doctrines of free grace, because they have been so frequently perverted to promote the unhallowed purposes of antinomian licentiousness; while others, observing how often personal holiness has been substituted, as the ground of a sinner's acceptance, for the alone scriptural basis on which a sinner's hope of salvation can rest—even the Redeemer's righteousness, have been led to embark in an unhallowed crusade against those very truths, which constitute the ultimate design and highest glory of the doctrines of the Cross—and, in the ardor of their zeal to destroy the proud, presumptuous claims of the self-righteous Pharisee, engage in an unholy warfare against that holiness, without which, (as a capacitating qualification, though not as a meritorious title, for Heaven's happiness,) no man shall see the Lord.

But there is perhaps no doctrine of Scripture, which has suffered more severely from this habit of confounding together the errors of man and the truth of God, than the all-important and most glorious doctrine of the second coming of the Son of God, to

which the eye of the believer is, in Scripture, constantly directed to look, as to the glorious bow of Christian promise, shining amidst the clouds and darkness, that overshadow the prospects of the Church's latter days—the bow, on which the Christian voyager to eternity is taught to fix his steadfast gaze, that he may be cheered and gladdened by its divine radiance, amidst all the storms which he must expect to encounter, till he arrives at the only haven, where he will be for ever beyond their reach—the heavenly haven of eternal rest.

This doctrine, from which the believer has been, in the oracles of God, directed to draw the most animating motives for vigilance, zeal, holiness, and consolation, has been at various times, and never perhaps more remarkably than in our own day, so mixed up with startling heresies, and wild schemes of millennarian prophecy, that many sober-minded Christians have been led, I fear, to extend to the doctrine itself the feelings of suspicious alarm, justly excited by the extravagant theories of those, who have grafted upon it heretical opinions, or speculative dreams—and, because it has been thus mixed up with the errors of heresy, or the reveries of enthusiasm, they have not given to it that place, in their own system of private meditation, or public teaching, which it occupies in Scripture ; and thus there arises a remarkable discrepancy between their statements, on many important and interesting scriptural subjects, and those of the word of God.

Herein has been exhibited the result of a tendency,

to which the human mind is singularly prone. In the desire to avoid one extreme, many have rushed into the opposite. The difficulty of navigating between the Scylla and Charybdis of opposing errors has been experienced. While steering their course amidst surrounding perils, in their eagerness to escape from the whirlpool of extravagance, many have struck against the rock of indifference, on this momentous subject. Because one class have given the second coming of the Son of God an undue prominence, placing it as the *principal* figure in the foreground of every representation of divine truth, and this, not exhibited in the sober tints of scriptural statement, but arrayed in all the gorgeous colouring of an enthusiastic imagination; the other class have as unduly depreciated its importance, almost entirely neglecting to introduce it into their portraiture of a Christian's privileges, and a Christian's hopes! Because the former have ventured to predict the exact period of the Redeemer's promised advent, forgetting "that it is not given unto them to know the times and the seasons, which the Father has put in His own power," and some have even dared, with presumptuous precision, to fix the very date of that day, of which "knoweth no man—no—nor the angels in heaven," but in the bosom of the eternal Father the awful secret lies concealed; the latter have neglected sufficiently to hold it up before the eye of faith, as the glorious object on which the believer ought to fasten his fond and steadfast gaze; or to remind themselves and others, (as frequently and earnestly as scripture requires them to do,) that

suddenly as the lightning's flash, unexpected and unwelcome to the world, as a thief in the night, the day of the Lord will come ! and that, therefore, now especially, when crowding signs in heaven and earth seem to betoken the approach of some eventful crisis, in the history of our race, professing Christians should be always ready—prepared to stand before the Son of Man, because we know neither the day nor the hour, wherein He may come ! but we *do* know, that come, in what day or at what hour He will, blessed are those servants of His, whom, when He cometh, He shall find watching !

Obliged, by providential appointment, to withdraw from the field of active labour, and left to stand alone on the watch-tower of observation, I have been led to think, after having attentively noticed some of the remarkable signs of the times, that, in the present peculiar circumstances of the Church of Christ, an attempt to moderate between the two extremes, to which I have alluded, if undertaken in an humble, affectionate, and prayerful spirit, might not be altogether unproductive of spiritual good, or unaccompanied with the divine blessing.

In considering this deeply interesting and important subject, I propose to adopt the following plan :—

First—To bring forward some of the more striking scriptural testimonies, that bear upon the subject.

Secondly—To suggest some probable reasons for the second advent of the Redeemer being exhibited, to the extent that it is in Scripture, as the object of a believer's habitual contemplation.

Thirdly—To draw some practical inferences and exhortations from the view taken of this glorious event—and

Fourthly—To address myself, in the language of affectionate advice, to the two classes of character, to which I have before adverted, as inclined, on this subject, to adopt opposite extremes.

We are now to consider, according to our proposed plan,

1st.—Some of the striking scriptural testimonies on this subject.

In selecting these, I shall confine myself to the New Testament—not because I do not think that the Old contains many, which might be fairly proved, by the soundest principles of honest interpretation, to bear upon the point—but because I wish to avoid altogether any passages, of at all a doubtful or disputable character; and to bring forward *only* such, as in their obvious meaning, unquestionably refer to the second advent of the Son of God, when He shall personally come in His glory, in visible and most awful manifestation. And such passages (as might have been expected,) are to be looked for *chiefly* in that portion of the Word of God, which contains the clearest announcement of the promises, and prospects, in their full and final consummation, declared, by the voice of prophecy, to be reserved for the church of Christ.

I am sure that any individual, who has not made the subject a matter of previous investigation, would be surprised at the result of an attentive research, by

discovering, how frequently the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is, in Scripture, brought before the believer's view, as an event which he ought to keep in constant recollection, to stimulate him to incessant watchfulness and untiring patience, in running the race set before him—and how those exhortations to unwearied diligence, and zeal, and perseverance, whether in advancing the life of God in our souls, or the cause of God in the world, which we are in the habit of deriving from other sources—particularly from the certainty of death, and the uncertainty of the time of its approach, are, in the Word of God, with a frequency and solemnity, the most impressive, derived from the certainty of the second coming of the Son of God, and the uncertainty of the day or the hour when He will come!

A few quotations will suffice to establish this assertion.

Let us look, then, for example, to the Christian duty of watchfulness. Would we exhort a child of God—one, in whose heart the love of a crucified Saviour reigns—one, whose hope of salvation rests, simply and unmixedly, on the merits of a Saviour's sacrifice, and whose life is constrainingly and consistently influenced by a grateful desire to promote a Saviour's glory—would we exhort such a one to be always in a state of Christian watchfulness, and preparation, in the scriptural sense of the words? Do we not draw our exhortations, principally, from the solemn reflection, that in the midst of life we are in death—and that we know not the hour when the

awful summons may be sent to us—"Prepare to meet thy God, for this night thy soul shall be required of thee!"

Now, I do not mean, for one moment, to deny that such exhortations are *most suitable*, and supply most powerful motives to a Christian's mind, for maintaining an habitual state of sleepless vigilance in the discharge of every Christian duty, and constant readiness, at a moment's warning, to appear in the immediate presence of the holy God.

But when the Saviour would inculcate on his followers the necessity of this ceaseless watchfulness, what is the consideration from which *He* derives His awful and awakening charge? "Watch," says the Divine Teacher, "for ye know neither the day, nor the hour, wherein the Son of Man cometh"—and, lest we might suppose the exhortation was intended only for those to whom He was then speaking, He adds the emphatic words—"What I say unto you, I say unto *all*—Watch!"*

I am fully aware that it may be said, that, for every practical purpose, this warning may be understood as equally impressive, whether we consider it to refer to the uncertainty of the hour of death, or of the second advent of the Lord from heaven. Nor do I forget, that to every individual, the day of his death is, virtually, the day of the coming of the Son of Man—as the seal of unchangeableness is equally stamped on his eternal destiny by the stroke

* St. Matt. xxiv. 42. St. Mark, xiii. 35, 36, 37.

of death, or the appearance of the Saviour—and either event equally terminates the period of a believer's watchfulness, and opportunities for labouring on earth, in the service of the Lord he loves. And so far from wishing to weaken, I would rather, (had I the power,) give *increased* emphasis to every motive for uninterrupted watchfulness, and abounding zeal in the work of the Lord, derived from the reflection how soon *must*—how suddenly *may*, come that night, wherein no man can any more watch or work. Still, if there be, (as I cannot but conclude, after the most attentive consideration of the chapter, from which the passage is taken, especially the 30 and 36 verses, that there is,) incontrovertible reason to believe, that the event to which our blessed Lord wished to direct the thoughts of His disciples then, and in every future age, as the grand stimulant to incessant watchfulness, was *His own promised return* to our world—so certain as to its ultimate fulfilment, but so uncertain as to its precise period, then does it seem to me incompatible with that profound respect, which we owe to every word which has been transmitted to us, as uttered by the Redeemer's lips, *habitually* to substitute for the event which He has thus stamped with the seal of His choice and approbation, as the appropriate motive for his people's watchfulness, *any other event*, which we may consider equally well adapted for this purpose.

Surely—could we even discover no peculiar marks of wisdom in the choice he had made, (and I am

far indeed, from believing this to be the case here,)—once we have reason to conclude, that, on any point, we have clearly revealed to us the mind and will of Christ, the only attitude that then becomes us, as His disciples, is that of the humble Mary, sitting in child-like teachableness, at His feet—to hear, with devout attention, and receive with unquestioning faith, every word, whether of warning or encouragement, of admonition or instruction, that proceeds out of His mouth.

We will be led to adopt the same conclusion, with increased force of conviction, if we examine attentively the parable* of the ten virgins.

In this singularly beautiful and impressive parable, the same duty of constant watchfulness is enjoined, and on the same ground, as in the preceding chapter.

The object presented to the eye of the believer, as the motive to stimulate him to be always watchful—always ready—is, *not* his own *death*, *but the second coming* of the Son of God! “Behold the Bridegroom *cometh*, go you forth to meet him!” The happiness he is led to anticipate is not so much derived from looking forward to the day when *he* shall *depart*, to be with Christ, as to the day when the *Heavenly Bridegroom* shall *come* to celebrate His espousals with His beloved Bride, the Church—and they that are ready shall go in with him, to the marriage; and shall know by blissful experience, how “Blessed are

* St. Matt. xxv. 1, 13.

they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb?"

Now I most willingly admit here, as before, that it is the very same line of conduct that should be pursued by a child of God, in the anticipation, either of the sudden appearance of the messenger of death, or the sudden appearance of the Son of God. Still I would observe, as before, that since the Saviour has here so expressly marked out the uncertainty of the period of His promised return to our world, as the ground on which He presses on His people the all-important duty of incessant watchfulness, we ought not, in the display of *our* wisdom, to substitute any other ground, *exclusively* or *prominently*, for the one He has chosen, in the exercise of His.

I say, *exclusively* or *prominently*—because I do not think we ought to overlook those other grounds, derived from the uncertain tenure of life, and the immediate blessedness of those who die in the Lord, since neither the Saviour, nor his apostles did so—but I *do* think that we ought to give to His second coming precisely that place in *our* teaching, which it occupied in *His*—and we have seen, I trust, enough, even already, to convince us, that this was no obscure or subordinate station, but one of evident prominence, and pre-eminent authority.

Let but the second coming of the Lord preside in *this*, its divinely appointed place, in our public and private ministrations, and *then* let *every other* motive, which Scripture sanctions, be urged with the degree of force and frequency that Scripture assigns.

Nor must one obvious, but not unimportant observation be omitted—that if the Redeemer considered such an exhortation suitable, at the period when He Himself was upon earth, knowing, as He did, the vast interval of time that must elapse before He should revisit it, with what an immense accession of force must the suitableness of such an exhortation apply to us, on whom indeed the ends of the world seem to have come—to us, whose providential lot is cast in a period, *apparently* distinguished by so many of the spiritual signs, which characterize the latter days of the history of the Church of Christ.

Is not this preeminently a time of “distress of nations, with *perplexity*?” Does not that word “perplexity,” designate, with an accuracy, most painfully clear and correct, the aspect of affairs, in whatever direction we look—at home or abroad, to the Church, or to the world? And if we were asked to describe the general tone of feeling, that pervades all characters and classes in our day, could we find terms more strictly appropriate, than to describe the present as a period, when “men’s hearts were failing them for fear, and for looking the things that are coming upon the earth?”

Is there not a general expectation, whether derived from the convulsions of the political, or the excitement of the religious world, from consulting the records of history, or the page of prophecy, that we are on the eve of some mighty change, some tremendous catastrophe, in the history of our race!

Can we observe the restless movements of the spirit of revolutionary frenzy, which, under the specious name of reform, is stalking, with gigantic strides, throughout the earth, uprooting things long established—overturning things, that appeared secure of such immortality as earth can give—threatening to rend asunder the very framework of society, and to dissolve the entire fabric of civilized government, throughout the world, and not be conscious that the earth is trembling beneath our feet, as if it felt, within its labouring womb, the threatening throes of an approaching shock, that will convulse it to its centre?

And can we see and feel these awful signs of the times, crowding around us, and never hear the whisperings of a yet more awful voice, that *seems* to break, more and more distinctly every day, on the attentive ear! “Behold the Bridegroom is coming! Watch, therefore, for you know neither the day, nor the hour when He will come!”

Let me not, however, be misunderstood, as if, in using these expressions, I had fallen into the very error I have previously deplored, and was presuming, with unwarrantable *confidence*, to declare—“The Lord is at hand.”

I would not attempt with presumptuous hand to pull aside, or with unhallowed eye to pierce through, the thick veil of intentional obscurity, which God Himself has flung over the *precise period* of the second advent of His Beloved Son, and which the event itself will alone lift up! But as, on the one hand, we ought not to attempt to discover what God has determined

to conceal from our view, or even desire to know what God has not thought fit to reveal ; so neither ought we, on the other hand, to overlook what God intended us to observe, or to be heedless and unreflecting spectators of what God has commanded us to ponder seriously, and solemnly lay to heart.

We should remember that it is equally disrespectful to the Divine Majesty, to pry, with unhallowed curiosity, into “ the *secret* things, which belong to the Lord our God”—or to neglect, with as unhallowed carelessness, the things which he *has revealed*, as matters of warning and admonition for us, and for our children. That as the one is a sinful encroachment on the Divine prerogative, so is the other a sinful contempt of the Divine condescension—and that the very same lips, which rebuked the former, by the grave reproof—“ It is not for you to know the times, and the seasons, which the Father has put in His own power”^{*}—have rebuked the latter in those words of yet severer condemnation.—† “ Ye hypocrites ! you can discern the face of the sky, and can ye not discern the signs of the times ?”

To neglect the signs of the times is then, in the Saviour’s estimation, no proof of superior wisdom ; but is branded with His strongly marked displeasure, as a proof of stupidity in divine, which is but rendered more conspicuous and censurable by sagacity in earthly, things.

Their skill in prognosticating the character of the

^{*} Acts i. 7.

† Matt. xvi. 3.

coming weather, is made the ground of condemning the spiritual ignorance or carelessness of those, who, from signs, more clear in their prediction, and more certain in their fulfilment, neglected to prognosticate the character of coming events—so that to anticipate what from scriptural signs it seems reasonable to expect, and to be prepared, accordingly, for approaching emergencies, which, to the experienced eye of faith, are seen to cast their shadows before them, as they are drawing nigh, seems to be not only matter of permission, but of precept, not only allowed, but enjoined us, by the Lord!

In truth, the state of mind that seems most desirable, in pursuing these deeply interesting subjects, appears to be this—not even to wish to be, in the *smallest* degree, on *any one* point, wise *above* what is written; but, at the same time to desire, with humble and reverential desire, to be wise, with divinely imparted wisdom, *up* to the very *fullest* extent of what is written! Not to wish to travel one step *into* any *forbidden* region of speculation—or to travel even within the regions of permitted research, one step *beyond* the spot, where the Hand of God has set up a barrier, bearing the divine inscription, “So far shalt thou go, but no further”—and, at the same time, through the whole length and breadth of the field of divine revelation, *up* to this scriptural limit, to pursue our investigation with the deepest humility, the most patient and persevering energy, and, above all, with unwearied prayer for divine teaching and guidance, in every step we take!

In considering further the testimony, on this subject, supplied by the Redeemer, we are next led to advert to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

In the celebration of this sacrament, we apprehend that, in general, the thoughts and feelings of the faithful and devout communicant are almost *exclusively* retrospective.

The mind, or rather the heart turns, with mingled emotions of the deepest penitence, and the liveliest gratitude, to the remembrance of the time, when, in testimony of the love wherewith He loved us, the Son of God was crucified for us men, and for our salvation—and it is, indeed, utterly impossible that we can, at any time, and more especially at *such* a time, remember, with too intense, and all-absorbing gratitude “the exceeding great love of our Master and only Saviour, Jesus Christ, thus dying for us.”

Still, while the remembrance of Christ crucified should thus stir up every generous and grateful feeling of the human heart, appealing to us, by the solemn recollections of His agony and bloody sweat—His cross and passion—to hate sin with a perfect hatred, to love Jesus with a perfect love, to trust in His sacrifice with a perfect confidence, and live to His glory with a perfect devotedness, ought not our views and feelings to be *prospective*, as well as *retrospective*?

Ought we not to keep in recollection, more distinctly and delightedly than, perhaps, we are accustomed, even in our holiest and happiest celebration of this sacramental memorial of our dear

Redeemer's dying love, that we do indeed meet together, to "show forth the Lord's death, *till He come*;" and that while remembering to sorrow, with a godly sorrow, for the sins which pierced Him with such inconceivable anguish, when, for our sakes, He was nailed to the cross, we do not forget to rejoice, with holy joy, in the prospect of the blessedness He shall bestow upon us, when He, who was once lifted up on that cross of shame, shall be seen, by an assembled universe, seated on His Throne of glory.

In truth, from the apostolic declaration, "Ye do show forth the Lord's death, *till He come*"—we see plainly, that it was the design of this Sacrament to answer a two-fold purpose; to be at once a memento of the Saviour's first, and a pledge of His second coming—and thus to keep these two glorious events (in being suitably affected by which, the very essence of the Christian character, with all its distinguishing peculiarities, consists,) perpetually present to the believer's view; that they may produce, by their united influence, all that humbling, yet elevating train of thought—all that tender, yet triumphant tone of feeling—all that lowly yet lofty cast of character, which the blended contemplation of the sufferings and triumphs of a once crucified and now glorified Redeemer, exhibited by bringing together into view Mount Calvary and Mount Tabor, is so singularly fitted to create and cherish.

* 1st Corinthians, i. 26.

And perhaps the frame of mind, in which a Christian should most fervently desire to be kept, while celebrating these holy mysteries, is one, compounded of the opposite feelings, which the scenes displayed on these two mountains are calculated to awaken, harmoniously blended together ! Feelings, of as profound penitence, fervent gratitude, and self-abasing humiliation, as if we were standing at the foot of Mount Calvary, and amidst the appalling darkness that shrouded the mountain, like a black funereal pall, beheld the Son of God, hanging between two thieves, convulsed with excruciating torture, and heard Him uttering that fearful cry—"My God ! my God ! why hast Thou forsaken me !" and remembered, while witnessing the awful spectacle, *this* is the price that Jesus paid for my redemption—*this* the death that Jesus died, that I might live for ever. And, at the same time, mingled with this penitential sorrow and self-abasement, feelings of as triumphant though awful joy, as if we were suddenly transported from Mount Calvary to Mount Tabor, and there beheld the bright cloud, like a celestial halo, circling the Mount—and saw the Son of God standing in His glory, between His two glorified servants—and heard the voice from Heaven declare, "This is my Beloved Son ! hear ye Him !" and, while gazing on that countenance, brighter than the sun, shining in his strength, and seeing the glory of the godhead, bursting, with dazzling splendor, through the veil of human flesh, remembered that *this* is but, as it were, the pledge and precursor of the glory that shall be revealed, in

the day when the Son of Man shall appear! and all His redeemed people shall appear with Him, in glory, *such as this!*

Thus will each sacramental commemoration of the Saviour's sacrifice be, at once, to the believer, an eloquent remembrancer of that sad and solemn supper, when, with "a soul exceeding sorrowful, even unto death," Jesus appointed this affecting memorial of His dying love, saying, "Do this in remembrance of Me!" and a sweet though short-lived antepast of the full and everlasting blessedness he shall enjoy, when the Bridegroom, who gave Himself for His beloved Bride, the Church, shall come to celebrate the day of His espousals—and the marriage supper of the Lamb shall be prepared—and a glorified Jesus shall preside, in person, amidst the vast assemblage of His glorified guests—a multitude that no man could number—and then will be fully understood and felt, what can only, even at the sweetest celebration of the sacramental supper of the Lord, be very faintly conceived or foretasted, in this world of woe, "*How* blessed are those, which are called and admitted to the marriage-supper of the Lamb!"

Let us transfer our thoughts to another of the mountains, consecrated, as it were, to our affections, by the history of our Lord, and another testimony to the importance of this subject will rise before our view!

* Eleven men are assembled on the Mount of

* Acts i. 9, 10, 11.

Olivet, looking up towards Heaven, with straining eyes, as if they were endeavouring to pierce through the clouds, that concealed some fondly-beloved object from their gaze !

It is the ascending Saviour, who has just passed into the clouds ; and there His sorrowing disciples stand, as if their spirits had indeed gone up to Heaven, with the Lord they loved—or they hoped the parting clouds would, for a moment, give back to their longing eyes the glorious Form, which had just been hidden from their sight !

But see ! two angelic messengers from the skies—with the appearance of men in white apparel, are standing beside the silent and sorrowing Apostles. And what is the message the angels are commissioned to deliver to them?—at once gently to reprove their false expectations, and tenderly to comfort their drooping hearts. “ Why stand ye, gazing up into Heaven ? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come, in like manner as ye have seen him go into Heaven ! ” Was not this for the purpose of reminding them, and through them, all the faithful followers of the Saviour, in every successive age, that while, with the eyes of faith and fond affection, they should follow their ascended Lord and Master up to Heaven, and there with Him in spirit continually dwell, they must not *stand* gazing after him, wasting their time in unprofitable speculations, or unwarranted hopes, of His immediate re-appearance, but be stimulated to active and unwearied exertions in His service, and

comforted amidst all the sorrows of separation, by the assured promise, and realized prospect, of His second coming in the clouds of Heaven, with power and great glory.

And surely if *this*, and *not* the prospect of so soon being re-united to the ascended Saviour, by their own approaching death, was the message sent from Heaven, to stir up the Apostles' zeal, and to sooth *their* sorrow, it must have derived with us, from the intervening lapse of centuries, an increase of suitableness, proportioned to the number of years which have brought us so much nearer the accomplishment of the glorious prophecy!

Let us again change the scene, and turn our eyes to the isle of Patmos, where the beloved disciple is confined, as a solitary prisoner, "for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ."* A solitary prisoner, yet the most highly favoured, and happiest human being then on the face of the earth—for the solitude of his prison was made to him the very gate of Heaven.

There Jesus appeared to his imprisoned servant, in the brightest manifestation of His mingled majesty and love,—(Jesus always manifests himself most gloriously and graciously to His servants, when suffering for His sake,) and vouchsafed to Him visions, the most magnificent in point of scenery, and momentous in point of design, that ever were vouchsafed to mortal eyes. The apocalypse of the

* Rev. i. 1, 9.

glory to be revealed, in the last days, was unveiled to the view of the enraptured Apostle; and the revelation of the future destinies of the Christian Church, which God the Father had given to His Beloved Son, even this did Jesus send and signify, by His angel, to his servant John.

And what is the opening announcement of this sublime revelation? What is the object presented to our view, in the very foreground of the celestial picture?

“Behold! *He cometh with clouds!** and every eye shall see him! and they also which pierced him! and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him! Even so! Amen.”

And how does the mysterious volume close? As the awful scenes and sounds, which in the course of this stupendous apocalypse of future events, burst on our souls with such overwhelming grandeur, seem as it were passing away, and the sublime vision is just disappearing, what is the last object still left for us to gaze on—what are the last sounds still left to linger on our ears?

† “Surely! *I come quickly!*”

Can we mistake the meaning, or shall we, (as far as in us lies,) frustrate the purpose of our blessed Lord, in thus opening and closing the apocalyptic vision with the announcement of His second, and (in the view of eternity,) speedy coming?

Must He not have intended this event to occupy a

* Rev. 1, 7.

† xxii. 20.

prominent and permanent place in His people's memory and heart, by thus leaving it, as the last object presented to their view, at the very close of the sacred canon—the last announcement of the written Word of God.

When we consider that the last time the Saviour's blessed voice was heard on earth, it uttered those impressive words—"Surely, I come quickly!"—can we, for one moment, doubt, that He designed *this* His second coming, to be the glorious object, that ought to be continually sparkling before the believer's eyes—*these* words to be the solemn warning, that ought to be for ever sounding in the believer's ears—the stimulant to ceaseless exertion, and sleepless vigilance—the sustainer of enduring patience, and exulting hope—His church's watchword in times of danger and temptation—her comforter in seasons of trouble and distress.

And does not this conviction come before us, stamped with the fullest assurance, and sealed with the most solemn sanction, which, the impress of divine authority can give, when we remember the *peculiar* and most terrible curse, denounced against those, "who shall add to, or take away from, the words of the book of this prophecy:" and the *peculiar* blessing promised "to him that readeth, and those that hear, the words of *this* prophecy—and keep those things that are written therein—for the time is at hand "

CHAPTER II.

SCRIPTURAL TESTIMONY CONTINUED.

WE come now to consider the apostolic testimony on this most interesting subject—and this, I think, we will find exhibiting a remarkable agreement with that which we have seen, was given by the Divine Founder of our faith, assigning to His second advent a peculiar prominence in their most animating and awakening addresses and appeals!

A few quotations will suffice to substantiate this.

Would we comfort a mourning child of God, who is sorrowing for some beloved object, that has fallen asleep in Jesus?

Do we not strive to pour the healing balm of divine comfort into the mourner's heart, by reminding him that his beloved one has escaped from all the storms of life's tempestuous sea, and reached the haven of eternal rest—has bid an everlasting farewell to sin and sorrow—and (to sum up all)—has departed to be with Christ.

And if we talk to him of the hope of a reunion with the object he has loved and lost, do we not tell

him of the time, when he too shall have finished his voyage, and reached the haven where he would be—and in that good land, beyond Jordan, shall meet with the beloved one, from whom death has separated him for a short season, to live and rejoice together, in that land of immortality, through the endless ages of eternity!

Far—very far be it from me, to deny or to depreciate the comfort—the sweet precious abundant comfort, which is contained in the *assurance* of the immediate blessedness of those who have fallen asleep in Jesus; or in the *hope* of being reunited to them, as soon as to us, as well as them, the prison doors of mortality have been thrown open, and our emancipated spirits have, like theirs, departed—to be with Christ!

I believe—yea! blessed be God—I know *there is* a comfort in this assurance, and this hope, in comparison of which, to one who has felt its power and its preciousness, all that this world, or ten thousand worlds like this, could offer in exchange, would be regarded as lighter than the small dust of the balance.

Still, it is most remarkable, *this is not* the apostolical mode of administering consolation under such a bereavement.

If we turn to the 4th chap. of 1st Thessalonians, 13th verse, we will find that St. Paul directed the thoughts of the Thessalonian mourners for consolation, *not* (as we perhaps would have done,) to the immediate blessedness of those who had fallen asleep in Jesus, not to the prospect of a speedy reunion, when they also should have passed through the sepa-

rating flood of death—but to the promised *day* of the *appearing* of the *Son of God*—the day, when the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout—and all His redeemed saints, whether raised from the dead by the blast of the trump of God, or found alive at His coming, shall be caught up together, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall be together, for ever with the Lord !

Does not the apostle's style of consolation strikingly differ from that which we are accustomed to adopt ? Does he not give to the second advent of our Lord *that place*, which we are wont to give to the emancipated spirit's immediate admission to the presence of the Lord ? And ought not we to follow the apostle's footsteps in comforting Christian mourners, and direct them, as he did, to the day of the coming of the Son of God ?

Let us now glance at another proof of our position. Would we pour out, on behalf of those that are dear to us in the bonds of fellowship in the Gospel, our fervent prayers for their final preservation, and perpetual progress unto perfection in holiness. Do not our desires and supplications on their behalf, point to, and, as it were, terminate in, the day of their death ? Is it not our pleading intercession for them, that they may be kept from falling, and be preserved blameless unto the termination of their earthly warfare ?

But what is the almost uniform style of apostolical supplication or benediction, on behalf of those they loved in Christ ?

“ The Lord (says St. Paul, to his beloved Thessa-

lonian converts,) make you to increase and abound in love, one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: to the end He may establish your hearts, unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, *at the coming* of our Lord Jesus Christ, with all his saints." "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly: and I pray God, your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless *unto the coming* of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

How solemnly did he charge his beloved Timothy to keep the commandment he had given him, "without spot, unrebukeable, *until the appearing* of our Lord Jesus Christ!"†

And (not needlessly to multiply quotations) how sublime the closing doxology of the epistle of St. Jude.

"Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless *before the presence of His glory*, with exceeding joy, to the only wise God, our Saviour"—(what an irrefragable testimony to the essential deity of Jesus!)"—"be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever! Amen!"

Now we fully recognize and rejoicingly remember, the delightful truth, (which so sustains the oft-times sinking spirit of the Christian warrior, amidst all the pains and perils of his arduous conflict,) that, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord! Even so, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours!"—

* 1st Thea. iii. 12, 13. v. 23.

† 1st Tim. vi. 13, 14.

from all those painful labours of watchfulness against sin, and weariness in service, which constrained them so often to groan, being burthened, and to long for the day of their death, as the day of their deliverance.

We feel assured, on the infallible authority of the word of God, that the believer and sin part company, for ever, the very moment that death has dissolved the tabernacle of clay; and the emancipated spirit goes forth from its house of bondage, to exult and expatiate in that glorious liberty from the assaults of even one sinful thought, with which Christ makes the released spirits of His blood-bought people free!

But does not this very fact make the apostolical phraseology only the more remarkable? Does it not plainly prove, how habitually present to the apostles' minds was the prospect of the second coming of the Lord with all His saints; and how earnestly they desired that it should be even thus present to the minds of their beloved brethren in Christ?

In truth, the more attentively we study the apostolical writings, the more deeply must we be struck with the constant recollection, in which the apostles themselves held, and manifested an earnest solicitude that their converts should hold, this glorious event.

Would St. Paul urge the Colossian converts to set their affections on things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God, and, as risen with Christ by a spiritual resurrection, and having their hearts in heaven, to mortify their members which were upon the earth, what is the animating prospect he holds

out, to encourage them to aspire to this exalted pitch of spirituality and heavenly mindedness?

“When Christ, who is our life, *shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory!*”*

Your life, he tells them, is now hid with Christ in God; but in that day of Christ’s manifestation, it shall be manifested, like Him, in inconceivable and everlasting glory! Oh! what a powerful motive for abstaining from sin, and keeping the heart fixed where the treasure was!

Would he express his fervent love for those, whom he was privileged to regard as the seals of his apostleship, who had been taught, under his ministry, the preciousness of Jesus, and to whom he declares that he was willing to have imparted, not the gospel only, but also his own soul, because they were dear unto him?

How is his spirit borne onward, (as he calls to remembrance all their past sweet communion together,) to the time when he hopes to meet them at the right hand of the Son of Man, as he sitteth on the throne of His glory—and to present them before that throne, with such joy, as might almost make angels envy. “What,” (exclaims the loving Apostle,) “what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye, in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, *at His coming*?”†

How does St. Peter comfort the Christians, to whom he wrote, who, though greatly rejoicing in the

* Col. iii. 4.

† 1st Thes. ii. 19.

prospect of the inheritance, incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved for them in heaven, were yet for a season in heaviness, through manifold temptations?

He tells them that it was the gracious design of their Heavenly Father, in their mercifully-appointed afflictions, that the "trial of their faith, being much more precious than of gold, that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory"—When?—†—"at *the appearing* of Jesus Christ!"

And again, when encouraging and comforting them under "the fiery trial" of persecution, "which was to try them"—"Rejoice," he says—(what a divine alchymy there is in genuine Christianity, that can thus turn fiery trials into occasions of rejoicing!) "rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that *when his glory shall be revealed*, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."

As if he had said, — Persecuted and suffering followers of a persecuted and suffering Saviour! be not cast down with fear or sorrow, because you are called upon to follow your Divine Master's footsteps, and, like Him, to pass through sufferings and shame, to everlasting joy and glory. Rather rejoice, remembering that as you have partaken of His reproach, you shall also be partakers of His triumph! for He has himself assured His faithful followers, that "if they suffer with Him, they shall also reign with Him."

* 1st Pet. i. 6, 7. iv. 12, 13.

Wherefore, in the prospect of *that day*, pass cheerfully through the most fiercely-burning fiery furnace, which the wrath of man can kindle, or the providence of God permit.

And how desirous St. Peter was to keep ever in their view this day of Christ's manifestation, is further evinced by the promised recompense of reward, which he holds up, to stimulate "the elders among them to feed the flock of God, willingly, of a ready mind, and above all, as being ensamples to the flock"—"Do this," he says, "and *when* the Chief Shepherd *shall appear*, ye shall receive a crown of glory, that fadeth not away."⁶

Not less striking or animating is the testimony of the beloved disciple—of him, who seems as if, in leaning on the bosom of his Divine Master, he had been privileged to approach nearer, and to drink deeper from that fountain of celestial love, than any of the Apostles—and whose writings, accordingly, breathe, in so preeminent a degree, the very spirit of the Saviour's character, the overflowing tenderness of divine love.

"Behold!" he exclaims in a transport of holy wonder, and rapturous amazement! "what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that *we* should be called the sons of God. Beloved, *now* are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear *what we shall be*." What heights of glory, we shall reach! what unsearchable riches are treasured up for us in heaven—

⁶ 1st Pet. v. 4.

for eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, the heart, even when holiest and happiest, cannot, while on earth, conceive, what good things God has prepared in Heaven for them that love him.—But we may well rest satisfied with this ignorance—which is, in truth, the result and pledge of a blessedness too vast, too glorious, to be grasped by mortal faculties, while we are thus encompassed around with sin and sorrow. We maybe well content not to know fully what we shall be, *because* we *do* know, that *when* He shall appear, we shall be like him—for we shall see him as He is !”*

More than this—to see Him, a Saviour-God, as He is, in the full unveiled brightness of His glory—and by the glorifying and beatific vision, to be transformed into the full and perfect resemblance to His divine image, and participation of His divine glory, to the utmost possible extent of creature perfection and capacity—more than this we cannot desire—more than this God cannot give ! But observe—when shall this consummation of all a believer’s brightest hopes be realized ? When is it that by the vision of a Saviour-God, he shall be made *perfectly* like Him ?

“ *When he shall appear.*”

And mark how here, as everywhere else, in the sacred volume, the exceeding great and precious promises of the Gospel are directed to practical purposes, and the unfolding of its glorious hopes made subservient to the promotion of the interests of holiness. Would that the Scriptural example had, in this point,

* 1st John, iii. 1, 2, 3.

been followed by all who, in our day, have been zealous in awakening the attention of the Church of Christ to the promise of the second coming of the Lord.

Having unfolded the glorious prospect that awaits the sons of God, when He who is their life and glory shall appear, "every one," (the Apostle adds,) "who hath *this* hope in Him, purifieth himself, even as He is pure."

But it is not merely for the purpose of supplying their beloved friends in Christ with materials for the most abundant consolation, and triumphant hope, that the Apostles desired them to keep the eye of faith for ever fixed on the approaching day of Christ's appearing.

There is not a feature of the Christian character, not a branch of Christian duty, that is not enforced on motives, derived from the contemplation of that glorious day.

Would the Apostle of the Gentiles exhort to watchfulness, sobriety of spirit, and being in a state of constant readiness, continually cased in the armour of God, and thus divinely defended from any sudden assault of the enemy of our salvation?

"Yourselves know perfectly," (he says to the Thessalonians,) "that the day of the Lord cometh as a thief in the night." (He knew that this was the very ground on which his Divine Master had exhorted His followers always to watch, and be ready.)

"But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that *that* day should overtake you as a thief." What an awful in-

timation that to be forgetful of, or unprepared for, that day, was a sign of spiritual darkness! “*Therefore* let us not sleep, as do others—but let us watch and be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for an helmet the hope of salvation.”*

What a blessed state to be found in, by the Lord at His coming! The Christian warrior—armed in his divine panoply!—awake, and watchful, at his post—looking and longing for the promised appearance of the Captain of his Salvation!—ready to rejoice, with exceeding great joy, when he sees His banner-flag unfolded from the battlements of Heaven, and hears the blast of the Archangel’s trumpet, heralding his approach!

Again, would he strengthen their “patience and faith in all the persecutions and tribulations that they endured?”

In what magnificent and awful language does he point their view to that coming day of recompense to their persecutors, but rest to them who were troubled, “when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven, with His mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished, with *everlasting* destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power, *when He shall come*, to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe, *in that day!*”†

* 1st Thes. v. 2, 4, 6, 8.

† 2d Thes. i. 4—10.

The Apostle does not, you see, direct their thoughts, when he would inculcate on their troubled minds patience amidst their persecutions, to the time of rest awaiting them, when their warfare should be accomplished, and they should reach those mansions of everlasting tranquillity and peace—"where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest."

He presents a far more splendid vision to their view! one which, if realised by a substantiating faith, might well enable them to look, undismayed, on all their persecutors, and on all their tribulations. He displays, before their divinely illumined eyes, the awful glories of the day of Christ's appearing! He exhibits the Lord—their own beloved Almighty Lord—descending from Heaven with a shout—revealed in flaming fire—attended with all His mighty angels—His enemies and theirs driven from before Him, as the dust before the whirlwind—and they themselves, with all His saints, invested with *such* glory, reflected from the Sun of Righteousness, then shining in all His strength, that Jesus Himself will be admired, and glorified in His saints, in that day! Oh! how powerless would the most powerful persecutors—how light would the heaviest load of affliction appear, in the realized prospect of that day of the revelation of the Lord!

And the testimony here given to the Apostle's desire to keep the day of Christ's manifestation ever present to their minds, is the more remarkable and important, because, as we see by the next chapter, some expressions in his former epistle had led to an

erroneous expectation amongst the Thessalonians, that the day of Christ was at hand—that the Lord was about immediately to appear. This error he corrects, by showing that various events must be accomplished, before the day of the Lord should arrive ! but (so far from withdrawing their thoughts from the subject,) he again, as we have seen, directs their attention to the prospect of the day itself, as a motive for patient endurance of the rage of persecution !

Could he more plainly, or emphatically, tell Christians, of every age, that though they should not be over-curious, or at all dogmatical, in their endeavours to ascertain the *precise period* of this glorious event, (about which they are as liable as the Thessalonians to make immense mistakes,) still the event itself, with all its magnificent and blissful prospects, all its animating, sanctifying, elevating, and comforting influences, ought to be kept by all, who love the Lord, in everlasting remembrance.

The same sentiment is briefly but very beautifully expressed, in the epistle to the Hebrews, when, exhorting them to steadfastness in the faith, amidst the reproaches and afflictions they had endured, for the truth's sake, the apostle solemnly reminds them—

“ Ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise—for *yet a little while, and He that cometh will come, and will not tarry !*”*

* Heb. x. 36, 37.

In the view of eternity, a thousand years seem to the apostle's eye but as a day!—a long lapse of centuries but a *little while*. Oh! that all Christians would live with such a realizing view of eternity always before them!

On another occasion, (to show how familiar the topic was to his mind, as a motive to the discharge of Christian duty,) when he would enforce moderation on his Philippian converts, how short, but how sublime his exhortation!

“ Let your moderation be known unto all men !
*The Lord is at hand !** The world, and the fashion and fleeting possessions thereof, are swiftly passing away ! The day of the Lord will soon burst on our view ! and, therefore, *no object* which, when the light of that day is flashed upon it, shrinks into insignificance, is worthy of the immoderate desires or pursuit of an expectant of the glory, which in that day shall be revealed !

In the same spirit we find St. James, when exhorting the brethren to wait patiently for their promised possession of rest and glory, as the fruits of their faith, (like the husbandman waiting with long enduring patience, for the precious fruit of the earth,) we find him adopting a similar style of exhortation—

“ Be ye also patient ! stablish your hearts, for *the coming of the Lord draweth nigh !*”† and when He comes, you shall reap a rich reward of all your patient

* Phil. iv. 5.

† James, v. 8.

waiting, even an abundant harvest of blessedness and glory!

Again, when he would rebuke the unseemly envyings, and jealousies, and contentions, which were so peculiarly unbecoming in the followers of the meek, and lowly, and loving Saviour of mankind, how strikingly solemn the dissuasive employed by the apostle—

“Grudge not one against another, brethrén, lest ye be condemned. Behold the Judge standeth before the door!”*

As if he had said—“Shall the voice of the servants be heard within the Church—which is the house of God, disputing and quarrelling together, when the Master is standing at the door, listening to all that is passing in the house—and the servants know not the moment He may knock, and call them before Him, as their judge, to render Him an account of the trusts committed to their charge! And is envying, and contention, and strife, the employment in which they would wish to be found by Him, when summoned into His presence, at His coming!”

How powerfully practical the purpose for which the Apostle refers to this glorious prospect of Christ's second advent! How does he make it minister to the use of *edifying*, by promoting the growth of cheerful patience, and brotherly love.

Another species of proof, on this most interesting subject, is supplied by the incidental manner, in which

* James v. 9.

the habitual expectation of the event is alluded to by the apostles, as a recognised and distinguishing mark of a believer—a peculiar and prominent feature of the Christian character—so essential to its full exhibition, at least, if not its existence, that the absence of it would have implied great, if not radical deficiency, as its prominence implied a high degree of proficiency, and progress towards perfection.

“Ye turned to God from idols, (says St. Paul to the Thessalonians,) to serve the living and true God, and to wait for *His Son from Heaven*, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.”*

Must not the “waiting for the Lord from heaven,” from its introduction into such a brief delineation of the change, which embracing the gospel had wrought in them, have been regarded by the apostle as of the very essence of the character, which that gospel was designed to form?

Again—Observe on what grounds St. Paul expresses his thankful joy on behalf of his Corinthian converts—those that were *sanctified* in Christ Jesus—

“I thank my God always on your behalf, that in every thing ye are enriched by Him, in all utterance, and all knowledge, so that ye come behind in no gift, *waiting for the coming* of our Lord Jesus Christ.”†

Could words more plainly or powerfully express the apostle’s conviction, that the possession of this habit of mind was a peculiarly precious gift of God—

* 1st Thes. i. 9, 10.

† 1st Cor. i. 4, 7.

a crowning and perfecting grace of the Christian character?

A similar observation will apply to a remarkable passage in the epistle to the Hebrews—

“As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment—so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.”* Having thus spoken of His first manifestation in the flesh, as an offering for sin, he leads the mind onward to His second appearance—“He shall appear (he says) a second time, without sin, unto salvation.” But to whom shall He *thus* appear? For whose full and everlasting salvation from every consequence of sin? Unto *them* that *look* (that are looking) *for Him!*

But, perhaps, the strongest proof of this kind is afforded in that finest compendium of the gospel scheme, contained in the epistle to Titus, which, within the compass of four verses, develops the whole design, substance, and glory of Christianity.†

In this splendid picture, which bears such unequivocal attestation of being drawn by a master hand, guided by the Spirit from on high—all is in perfect keeping—there is neither redundancy nor defect—nothing could be removed, without manifest injury—and nothing added, with conceivable advantage to the general effect.

We have here the full development of the gospel scheme, traced from its first origin, in “the grace of God,” to its final result, in the production of a

* Heb. ix. 27, 28.

† Titus ii. 11—14.

"purified and peculiar people, zealous of good works." In contemplating this divine portraiture of the gospel, two things principally arrest our attention—

First—The preeminently *practical* character of Christianity; and, secondly, the peculiarly distinguishing hope of the Christian.

Let us, in confirmation, examine the picture more in detail. We see, then, the divine original of Christianity, the fountain from which it flowed—"the grace of God:" the divine stream flowing from that fountain—"salvation:" the divine lesson it is designed to teach—"teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world:" the divine hope which sustains and sanctifies the believer—"looking for the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour (i. e. the great God, even our Saviour) Jesus Christ:" the divine sacrifice for sin, which is the alone foundation of that blessed hope; "He gave *Himself* for us," and the divine purpose He had in offering up that sacrifice—"that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

See we not by this compendious, yet complete definition of the Christian scheme, that the religion of the gospel is essentially a practical religion—that the personal holiness, the perfect purification, of those who come within the sphere of its divine influence, is the original design and ultimate end—the commencing process, and crowning glory, of the gospel. To accomplish *this* the grace of God appears—*this* is the

essence of the salvation which it brings—*this* the purport of the lesson it is sent to teach—*this* the object which its blessed hope is given to promote—*this* the design, in offering up Himself, of the Almighty Saviour it proclaims—and *this* the result effected by the Holy Spirit through the all-sufficient sacrifice it reveals.

And is it not equally manifest that the Apostle, from the place he assigns, in *such* a definition of the gospel scheme, to looking for the appearing of the great God our Saviour, must have regarded *this* as the peculiarly distinguishing hope of the believer, in which all his brightest prospects ought to centre, and to which all his fondest aspirations should continually turn. And is it not most instructive to observe, from the place thus assigned to it, what a pre-eminently powerful means St. Paul must have considered *this hope* to be, of promoting the believer's sanctification—stimulating and supporting him in his victorious conflict with worldly lusts—his zealous and unwearied devotedness to all good works!

Not less striking is the testimony of St. Peter, nor less practical the purpose for which it is introduced.

From the opening of the 3rd chapter of his second epistle, it would appear that the subject of which the chapter treats—namely, the second coming of the Lord, was one which the apostle knew to have been earnestly inculcated on the minds of those to whom he wrote, as the subject both of prophetic announcement, and apostolic teaching; so that he writes only to “stir up their pure minds” by way of remem-

brance, that they might be mindful of a truth, whose importance they had recognised, and whose power they had felt. He seems anxious to confirm them in the faith of this glorious truth, and to guard them against the influence of any opinions, by which that faith might be shaken.

For this purpose he tells them, that in the last days there shall come profane scoffers, who, from not noticing the signs of the times, but observing the general course of events in the works of creation, and dispensations of Providence, to continue unchanged, will tauntingly ask, "where is the promise of His coming?" thus intimating, that as it is of the very essence of scoffing infidelity to disbelieve or disregard the second coming of the Lord, so, by contrast, a firm belief and constant and joyful anticipation of that event is of the very essence of Christian faith.

The apostle then explains the cause of the delay of the Lord's second advent, and shews that, like the delay of the threatened deluge of old, it arises from the patient mercy of a long-suffering God—"not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance!" and therefore delaying to pour forth the threatened flood of vengeance, till all His children, the whole remnant according to the election of grace, are safely sheltered in the divinely-appointed ark.

But, as, of old, the deluge, though its coming was scoffingly disbelieved, and delayed in mercy, did at length, in an hour unexpected by the mocking infidels

of the antediluvian age, suddenly burst forth, and sweep away a whole world of sinners, so certainly and so unexpectedly will the day of the Lord come, as a thief in the night; and a second deluge, not of water, but of fire, shall in a moment blaze forth, when the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the earth and all things therein shall be burned up.

But for what purpose does the Apostle present to their view this tremendous spectacle of the departing Heavens, and the dissolving elements, and the burning earth? Why does he thus exhibit the universe in convulsion, and the world in flames?

Not to terrify the mind by the appalling horrors, or to excite the imagination by the awful scenery, of that coming day of the world's dissolution!

No! the Apostle had a higher and holier object in view. "Seeing then," (he says,) "that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be, in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto, (or, as the original might be rendered, hasting,) the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?"

Thus does he make this awful event a preacher of holiness—as if he wished those to whom he wrote, while contemplating the approaching dissolution of the visible heavens and earth, to gather even from their ruins the most impressive motives for abounding in all holy conversation; and to hear, amidst the great noise of the Heavens passing away, the crash

of dissolving elements, and the groans of an expiring world, an awful voice crying out—"See what hath ~~in~~, the destroyer, done!" and thus proclaiming, by these manifested tokens of His righteous displeasure against ungodliness, Jehovah's solemn command—"Be ye holy, for I am holy!"

But how, it may be said, could the Apostle urge them to desire so earnestly the day of the world's destruction? Is not this an event rather to be contemplated by a believer, with awful, though not agonizing fear, than with eager and joyous anticipation?

The Apostle does not allow their minds to rest on it exclusively, as a day of dissolution, but a day of renovation—of the restitution of all things—a day, when, from the ashes of the old creation, a new and more glorious one shall arise. "Nevertheless, we," (he says) "according to his promise, look for new heavens, and a new earth!"

But, now, mark again the sobriety of the Apostle's spirit. See how the veil is lifted up from the visions of futurity, *only enough* to subserve the interests of holiness, not to gratify the cravings of curiosity, or to feast the eye of the imagination.

What alone are we told with certainty of these new heavens, and this new earth? The only thing it concerneth us to know for practical purposes, for promoting a holy character and conversation—

"Therein dwelleth *righteousness*."

And how eagerly does the Apostle seize this only distinctly-revealed feature of the beauty and blessed-

ness of this new creation, as the ground of that most solemn and affectionate exhortation—"Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for *such* things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless."

As if he had said—Remember, beloved brethren, whatever else of external grandeur or loveliness may be stamped upon this new creation, its essential glory is that "therein dwelleth righteousness;" that its very atmosphere is an atmosphere of holiness—so piercingly pure, that nothing sinful could live in its element, or breathe its air.* Wherefore, beloved, seeing that you look for *such* things, use all diligence that your character may correspond with that of this new creation—that in your heart, as in this new world, righteousness may dwell! that your souls may, like those new heavens, and that new earth, be "without spot" or stain of sin.

It now only remains briefly to prove, that the Apostles were in the habit themselves of looking to the second coming of our Lord, even as they desired their converts to look, with habitual and joyful anticipation. A few quotations from the epistles of St. Paul will completely satisfy our minds on this point.

* I cannot forbear referring, on this subject, to an exquisitely beautiful sermon, preached in St. John's Church, Glasgow, by that most eminent Christian philosopher and divine, the Rev. Doctor Chalmers—in which the distinction between what is essential and what is circumstantial, in the new heavens, and the new earth, is treated with a clearness of discrimination, a power of argument, a brilliancy of eloquence, and an impressiveness of appeal, scarcely to be paralleled even in his own writings.

In that most precious chapter of that most precious epistle—the 8th of the Epistle to the Romans, after the Apostle, by a singularly bold and sublime figure, had represented the whole creation as groaning and travailling in pain together, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God, he alludes to his own sympathy, with its agonizing groans, and earnest expectation of a glorious deliverance, in those affecting words:—

“Not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption—to wit, the *redemption of our body*.”*

He had just been speaking of the *spirit of adoption*, whereby he was privileged to cry, “Abba, Father!” He had experienced, and gratefully acknowledged, the redemption of his *soul* from the bondage of Satan, and the slavery of sin—yet he was still groaning within himself—waiting for the *full* enjoyment of the privileges of his adoption, (for as yet he conceived he had only received the first fruits of the Spirit,) even the redemption of his body from corruption and death, and its resurrection as a spiritual and glorified body—and this he knew could not take place till the day of the manifestation of the sons of God—the day when Christ, who is the Resurrection and the Life, should appear, and he also should appear with Him in glory.

The same train of thought is pursued on another occasion, with a more distinct announcement of the

* Romans viii. 19—23.

Apostle's preference of the prospect of the period of Christ's appearing to that of his own death, as a subject of gladdening thought, and consolatory expectation.

"In this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house, which is from heaven." And again he says, repeating the ardent longings of his soul—

"We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burthened, *not* for that we would be unclothed, *but* clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life."*

It is true, so intense is his desire to be with Christ, that he afterwards tells us, he was willing rather to be absent from the body, if thus alone he could be immediately present with the Lord; but it is plain that the supreme object of his desires and hopes was to be present with the Lord, clothed upon with his house from heaven—his glorified spirit dwelling with Jesus in a glorified body, as the celestial habitation prepared for it by the hand of God.

Another remarkable instance occurs in his Epistle to the Philippians, where he is holding up himself as an example for them to follow—"For," (he says) "our conversation (or citizenship) is in Heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ."†

Here you see the constant attitude of his soul, looking for the Saviour! Oh! what a blessed life

* 2d Cor. v. 2, 3, 4.

† Phil. iii. 17, 20, 21.

would ours be, if our souls were always in *this* attitude—the desiring gaze of our affections thus habitually straining upward, watching for the appearance of the Saviour!—the Lord Jesus Christ!

But why does the Apostle thus eagerly look for His appearance? What is it he hopes that the Lord from Heaven will accomplish for him, when He appears? Hear from himself—“Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like His own glorious body, according to the working, whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto himself!”

Could the Apostle more expressly declare that he regarded the redemption of his body, its resurrection in the likeness of the Saviour’s glorious body, as the triumphant display of the Redeemer’s omnipotence—the crown and climax of his own highest hopes, to effect whose consummation he longed for the appearing of the Lord!

It is almost superfluous to allude to the celebrated chapter in the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians,* where this subject is specially treated, with a grandeur of conception, a splendour of imagery, and a magnificence of language, to which the loftiest passages of the most sublime of Heathen writers, are no more to be compared, than the feeblest cries of an infant’s voice to the loudest peals of the Almighty’s thunder.

One cannot, however, refrain altogether from observing how identified, in the Apostle’s mind, with the full glory and final triumph of the Redeemer’s conquest

* 1st Cor. xv.

over Satan, is the redemption of the body of His saints from the curse of death, incurred by sin; for it is only, he says, "when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, that *then* shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, 'Death is swallowed up in victory.'"

Nor can we for a moment doubt, that the Apostle found this glorious hope of his body, that should be sown at death in corruption, dishonour, and weakness, being raised at Christ's appearing, in incorruption, glory, and power, a most delightful and efficacious stimulant to keep him (as he exhorted his beloved brethren, in the prospect of it, to be kept) "steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."

We would conclude this part of our subject with what we may call the Apostle's sealing testimony, delivered under circumstances, which stamp on it a character of peculiar solemnity and interest in our eyes.

Could we have been privileged to witness the closing scene of the Apostle's life, with what profound attention would we have listened to his parting exhortations; and how would we treasure up in our heart of hearts the last words that lingered on his expiring lips, resolved that we would lean, in a dying hour, on whatever prop we beheld supporting *his* sinking spirit, and look to whatever prospect we saw brightening to *his* closing eyes the visions of an unveiled eternity.

This privilege we are, in one sense, permitted to

enjoy. We have the secret recesses of his heart, with all its most hidden workings, in the anticipation of approaching martyrdom, thrown open to our view. And what do we find to be the hope which then gladdened his heart—what the prospect on which his spirit then delighted to gaze?

Let us, as it were, draw near with affectionate respect, and hear from his own lips the history of what is passing within his heart.

“I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.”* What pathetic sublimity there is in the calm composure with which the Apostle contemplates his approaching death; and this, although the expression “to be offered” affectingly intimates, that he was well aware his blood was to be poured out as a libation—himself to be offered as a sacrifice—to seal the truth of the gospel, and the testimony he had borne on its behalf, by a martyr’s death.

Now, the Apostle’s eye glances back on the retrospect of his life, since he met Jesus on the way to Damascus; and, oh! with what an air of humble triumph, of joyful recollection, does he look back on the path he had since been enabled, by divine grace, to pursue; and how sweetly comes over his spirit the memory of all he had done and suffered for his dear Redeemer’s sake—“I have fought the good fight—I have finished the course—I have kept the faith.”†

When did the worldling ever look back, with such

* 2d Tim. iv. 6.

† 2d Tim. iv. 7.

feelings, on a life spent in the service of the god of *his* idolatry? Oh! this, *this* is the triumph of Christianity! The life spent in a Saviour's service will bear to be looked back upon with delight, even on a dying bed.

But now the Apostle looks forward; and here the solemn and striking testimony, to which we have alluded, bursts on our ears—"Henceforth (he says) there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at *that day*."*

He does not say what day, but this only makes the expression more emphatical—it shows how habitually the Apostle's mind was wont to dwell on the anticipation of the day of Christ's appearing. It was unnecessary to mention it more expressly—*that day*, he felt, must be at once understood, familiar, ever present to every real Christian's memory and heart!

But St. Paul was, perhaps, the most unselfish of merely human beings that ever lived. His spirit had caught a glimpse of the glory to be revealed at the day of Christ's appearing. He beheld himself receiving from his Redeemer's hands a blood-bought crown of righteousness; but he could not be absorbed in the anticipation even of his own happiness in that day. He rejoicingly remembers that it will be shared by a multitude, that no man could number. He beholds the Son of Man seated on the Throne of His

* 2d Tim. iv. 8.

glory, encircled *by all His saints*—each of the countless host, like himself, receiving from the Lord a crown of righteousness; and as he gazes on the glorious vision, feeling his own happiness identified with, and increased by, the happiness of all the redeemed, who shall partake with Him in the triumphs of that day, “not to *me only*, (he exclaims in a transport of benevolent rapture,) but unto *all them also*, (now, mark the Apostle’s definition of a Christian!) that *love His appearing*.

CHAPTER III.

PROBABLE REASONS FOR THE PROMINENCE GIVEN TO THIS SUBJECT IN SCRIPTURE.

I have been thus copious and minute in examining the more striking testimonies of the Word of God, on this deeply interesting subject, because it is obviously of primary importance, to ascertain whether the position we have advanced, (namely, that the second coming of our Lord is the event to which the eye of the believer ought to be continually directed, in patient hope, and joyful expectation, of the glory then to be revealed,) rests on a scriptural foundation. I say of primary importance ; because if the opinion be not established on the sure and incontrovertible basis of the written word of God, no matter how specious the arguments by which it may be supported, or how important the advantages by which it may appear to be attended, it is not entitled to be respected or received by those, who are resolved to weigh every doctrine in the balance of the sanctuary, and reject every opinion, however attractively engaging in its

aspect, or plausibly advocated by human ingenuity, on which we cannot set this scriptural seal, "It is written."

On the other hand, if it be plainly revealed, and that, too, as a truth of paramount interest and importance in the Christian scheme, we must not be deterred from assigning to it, in our private meditations or public ministry, that place which we find allotted to it in the Word of God, either by our apprehensions of the mischief which *may* result, or our observations of the mischief which *actually has* resulted, from this revealed truth having been fastened on by men of enthusiastic temperament, mingled with their own unwarranted speculations, and thus so perverted from the purposes for which it was revealed, as to have been made a powerful means of injuring the peace and prosperity of the Christian church.

In this respect, as in every other, where the authoritative voice of God distinctly declares to us His will in His word, duties alone are ours—results exclusively are His. Nor must we allow any reasonings of our own to persuade us to keep back, or throw into the shade, any truth, clearly revealed in scripture, in regard to which the God of scripture has marked, by unquestionable characters, His wish, that it should be brought forward, and placed in strong light and a prominent position, in our representations of that gospel, which in His infinite compassion He has revealed.

And this is undeniably our duty, *even if* we could discover no satisfactory reason, why such prominence

should be given to such a doctrine; because our obligation to receive any doctrine, or obey any command, contained in scripture, arises *exclusively* from the *fact* of the doctrine being revealed, or the command enjoined by God, and not from our being able to discover the reason *why* God has revealed such a doctrine, or enjoined such a command.

For example, we are bound to receive the doctrine of the atonement, *because* it is so plainly revealed in scripture, as being, by divine appointment, the sinner's only ground of acceptance with his offended God—not because we perceive its exquisite suitability for this purpose, as so beautifully harmonizing, and so illustriously glorifying, all the divine attributes in the scheme of salvation, through the infinitely meritorious sacrifice of the well-beloved Son of God.

The perception how wonderfully it is fitted for its high destination, as being “the wisdom of God, and the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth,” may, indeed, justly deepen our confidence and comfort, in resting on this divine foundation the whole weight of our eternal hopes; but the *obligation* to rest all our hopes for eternity on “Christ crucified,” does not at all depend on our perception of this adaptation, but *altogether* on the simple declaration of the Word of God, that “Christ crucified is the wisdom of God, and the power of God, unto every believer's salvation.” Which declaration would be equally binding on us, whether we could, or could not discover what appeared to us satisfactory reasons why such a scheme of salvation should have been

arranged by the wisdom, and accomplished by the power of God.

At the same time, it is no less our duty than our privilege, having received the doctrine on the authority of the written word, and resting, with entire confidence, on the sacrifice offered upon Calvary, *because* that word sets it forth as the divinely appointed ground of a sinner's trust, it is, I say, equally our privilege and our duty, to trace, with reverential humility and adoring gratitude, those glorious lineaments of the divine character, which are so legibly inscribed on this stupendous scheme of salvation, that enlightened reason joyfully assents to the testimony of revelation, in acknowledging it to be indeed the very wisdom of God, and the power of God!

In the same way, our obligation, if believers, habitually ourselves to look, and to direct our fellow-believers to be habitually looking, for the appearing of the great God, our Saviour, arises altogether from our being, as we have seen, commanded by the highest authority, that of the Saviour and His apostles, to do so—and this obligation must be equally imperative on us, whether or not we can discover such reasons, as may satisfy us *why* the command has been given. And at the same time it is both our privilege and duty, in regard to this as every other revealed truth, reverently and prayerfully to investigate the subject, and search for traces of the divine wisdom in the revelation of the divine will.

This leads us to the second point we purposed to consider, namely—probable reasons why, in Scrip-

ture, the day of the appearing of the Son of God is so prominently exhibited, as the event to which the believer is taught continually to look, for motives to stimulate him to the zealous discharge of all the duties of his Christian walk, and for support amidst all the toils and trials of his Christian warfare !

In bringing forward such reasons as, on mature reflection, have suggested themselves to my own mind, I would propose them in the spirit of one, who is perfectly aware, that in the opinions he advances as to the reasons, *why* such a prominent place is given in Scripture to the second coming of the Lord, he is liable to be mistaken—and therefore will not be either surprised or displeased, if to other minds the reasons assigned appear destitute of convincing force. And I would only, in that case, entreat such unsatisfied readers to draw the line of demarcation between the suggestions of this chapter, and that which follows, (which they are at perfect liberty to reject, if their judgment is not convinced,) and the *testimonies* of the preceding chapters, which they are bound implicitly to receive !

Let not the apprehended weakness of the one prejudice, in their eyes, the undeniable strength of the other ! Let the opinions of man be canvassed and criticised, and (if they seem to deserve it) condemned, without hesitation—but let the Word of God, uninjured in estimation by the unskilfulness of its advocate, and unweakened in authority by the feebleness of his arguments, claim and command that unquestioning submission of the understanding and the heart, to

which, as the Word of the living God, it is entitled from every reader of the sacred page.

The prominent exhibition given to the second coming of the Son of God, in the Gospel scheme, may, I think, be in part accounted for by the consideration, that the habitual anticipation of this event is calculated, with peculiar power, to develop and cherish some of the most distinguishing, most exalted, and loveliest features of the Christian character—those in which the essence of its divine beauty and glory pre-eminently consists—and this, in a three-fold point of view—1st, As regards the Redeemer. 2nd, As regards His redeemed people: and 3rd, as regards the believer himself.

I.—As regards the Redeemer.

When once a sinner is convinced of the immensity of his obligations to the Saviour—that but for that Saviour's love, immortality had been to him only an immortal curse, because throughout eternity, had it not been for all that Jesus suffered on his behalf, only one wild wish would have wrung his tortured soul—the wish that he had never been born—while, through the love displayed towards him, and the sufferings endured for him, by the Son of God, he hopes to be as happy, throughout eternity, as any created being can be, or can desire to be—there springs from this conviction, in that sinner's heart, a sentiment of such gratitude to the Saviour, as colours the whole current of his future life—and turns it into a channel, in which the feelings and affections of the most amiable of the children of the world never flow.

He becomes, emphatically, a new creature—a new spirit is breathed into him—a new bias is given to every passion of his soul—a new bent is imparted to every affection of his heart—he lives for a new object—is stimulated by a new hope—and pants after a new happiness. In a word—“with him to live is Christ!” All his thoughts, desires, affections, are centered on Christ—all his aims, purposes, pursuits, are identified with Christ—all his hopes, joys, consolations, are derived from Christ. He is interested in nothing so deeply as his Redeemer’s interest—rejoices in nothing so intensely, as meditating on and sharing his Redeemer’s joy—glories in nothing so triumphantly, as contemplating and partaking his Redeemer’s glory!

If he derives pleasure from the possession of any talent, which the bounty of his God has bestowed upon him, it is because he hopes he may be enabled, through the instrumentality of that talent, to glorify his beloved Redeemer’s dear and precious name.

Now, whenever this supreme love to the Saviour is enthroned in the heart, there flows from it a feeling, of the very conception of which the children of the world, as such, are utterly incapable, and yet a feeling the most elevating in its influence, and exalted in its enjoyment, of which the human mind is susceptible—I mean, what I might call, a disinterested delight in the contemplation of the Redeemer’s own happiness and glory—not so much independently of, as distinct from, and over and above, the consideration of our being ourselves, if believers, (in right of our union and

PROBABLE REASONS, ETC.

joint-heirship with Christ,) partakers of that happiness, and that glory.

This feeling, the most elevating and gladdening which a believer's heart can cherish, derives its sweetest and holiest influences, from the contemplation of the second coming of the Son of Man!

Now, alas! wherever we look, whether around or within, we see much to sadden our spirits, in the consideration of all that our adorable Redeemer has to witness in our world, that must be, (as far as we may speak of Him, in terms suited rather to our weakness, than His glory,) displeasing to His eyes, and wounding to His heart! For though it be most true, (and it is to those who love him a most comforting and gladdening truth,) that He is the "Man of Sorrows" no more, nor will ever be so again—(for, on the morning of His resurrection, he bade farewell to sorrow for ever)—still, when He bends his eye on earth from his mediatorial throne, He must behold much, both in the world, and his own church, to excite His displeasure, and (as far as we may apply the expression to Him now,) to grieve His heart.

By the vast majority of those who have heard the glad tidings of His birth, he is still rejected and despised—His love treated with contempt—His invitations spurned with scorn—the story of His sufferings read without a tear!—the offer of his salvation rejected without a sigh! The infidel scoffs at Him—the formalist makes light of Him—the reason-worshipping Socinian endeavours to undeify, and the self-righteous Pharisee to dethrone Him—

the proud legalist would rob Him of His glory, and the profane Antinomian fix a stigma on His name.

And when we turn to His own people, oh ! it is then indeed we might well wish that our head were a fountain of tears, that we might weep, day and night, for the dishonour done Him by His own professing and peculiar people. Alas, how does the Redeemer receive the deepest wounds, to pierce His tender heart, in the house of His own friends ! One wounding Him by secret distrust and discontent—another by open inconsistencies and transgressions ; one forgetful of Him in solitude—another ashamed of Him before the world ; here He is displeased by the concealed idolatry of the heart—and there dishonoured by the palpable irregularity of the life.

Who—who that loves the Saviour in any measure as he ought, can think of these things, and forbear to weep ? Nor can these painful feelings find relief in the prospect of the day of our death ; because, though that day may relieve us from witnessing these things, yet will they still remain, to dishonour and offend the Redeemer that we love !

But oh ! when we look to the day of His second coming, what a glorious contrast is presented to our view ! Brighter glory than our beloved Redeemer will be encircled with—fuller blessedness than He shall enjoy, in that day, our hearts in the very warmest glow of their affection, the very highest transports of their gratitude, cannot desire for Him, whose happiness ought to be—if we could separate them—immeasurably dearer to us than our own.

In that day He shall come in his own glory, and His Father's glory, and all the holy angels with Him ; and then shall He sit upon the Throne of His glory ! and before Him shall be gathered all nations, and all people shall do him homage ! Unto Him *every knee*, either in crouching agony, or grateful adoration, *shall bow* ; and every tongue, either trembling with terror, or triumphant with joy, *shall confess* that *He is Lord*—even Lord of Lords, and King of Kings, to the glory of God the Father !

It is *then* that the Divine Husbandman, who went through our world weeping, as He sowed the good seed of eternal life, shall come again, rejoicing, with joy indeed unspeakable, bringing all His gathered *shaves* to be laid up in His heavenly garner, in that harvest-day of glory !

It is *then* that the heavenly Bridegroom shall be solemnly united before a mighty congregation of assembled angels, to His beloved bride, who shall be presented to Him, on that morning of His espousals, “ a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing,” arrayed in the wedding garment, which He himself wrought for her, while he tabernacled upon earth—even the ~~sanctified~~ ^{spotless} robe of His own righteousness ; while the marriage feast will be celebrated with all the magnificence and rejoicing, which may be anticipated on such an august occasion, when the Bridegroom is the Son of God—the Bride, the Lamb's wife, the church, which He has bought with His own blood—and the marriage-feast is prepared

by the Everlasting Father, to show how He delighteth to honour His well-beloved Son.

This—this was the joy set before Him in heaven, for which He was well content to resign, for a time, the glories of His Eternal Throne, and to appear on earth, as One “despised and rejected of men ;” yea, to be treated as a worm, and no man—the very scorn and outcast of the people. This—this the joy for which He was even content to endure the cross, despising alike its sufferings and its shame.

Gleamings of this joy brightened, we doubt not, at passing intervals, the clouded path of humiliation and suffering, which the Divine Man of Sorrows trod upon earth, as He toiled along in His mysterious pilgrimage of redeeming love.

Such glimpses, we may reverentially conclude, were vouchsafed to Him that night, when he retired apart to a mountain to pray, and spent the whole night in prayer, preparatory to the appointment of those apostles, who were to sow that precious seed, from which, when the harvest of the earth was ripe, He was to reap such abundant joy and glory. Such, too, when He stood, in the splendour of His divine majesty, on the mount of Transfiguration, and beheld in His glorified attendants, and rejoicing disciples, the pattern and prelude of the glory to be revealed in the day of His appearing, when His buried saints shall, like Moses, be raised with glorified bodies, and the living be caught up, like Elijah, to meet Him in the air.

And oh! what a bright prophetic dawn of this day of His glory must have burst around Him, on the morning of His resurrection! What sublime joy must have thrilled through the Redeemer's soul, when, on that morning, He arose from the dead, and coming out of the sepulchre, looked forth for *the first time* on a ransomed world—a world, on which its reconciled Creator's smile must then have seemed peacefully to rest.

And when, on that morning of His own resurrection, the Saviour, in the visions of futurity, beheld the myriads of immortal spirits, who, as being washed in His blood, and sanctified by His grace, should, on the morning of the resurrection of all His saints, appear with bodies glorified like His own, to swell the triumph, and participate in the happiness of the Lord, in that day—Oh! surely, in the anticipation of this glorious recompense of His sufferings and death, the spirit of the Son of God must have rejoiced with such joy, as only the infinite mind of Deity can fully comprehend.

But not more than as the glimmering of the first streak of dawning light, which proclaims the approach of the rising sun, compared with the full blaze of that sun in his meridian splendour, was even *this* joy, when compared with what the Redeemer will feel, on the day of His second coming, when He shall appear in the full blaze of His glory, and seated on that great white Throne, shall see Himself surrounded by the whole company of His redeemed people, the innumerable myriads of rejoicing heirs of

glory ! And as he looks forth from His Throne, on the countless multitude, and reads in every countenance the unutterable fulness of joy and gratitude towards Himself, that reigns in every heart, and hears from every voice the ascription of adoring thankfulness and praise to Himself, as the generous Benefactor to whom they owe all their blessedness ; Oh, surely, in that moment, when, from ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands of redeemed and rejoicing saints, eyes, sparkling with more than angelic rapture, are all fastened on *Him* in grateful love ! and voices, glowing with more than seraphic fire, are all pouring out before *Him* that sublime song of praise—" *Thou* art worthy ! for Thou hast redeemed us unto God by Thy blood ! to receive from us honour, and blessing, and praise for ever and ever !" —then, then, indeed, when, with the sight of all His people's happiness full before His view, and the sound of all their united voices rising in one full burst of rapture and praise upon His ears ; when He then remembers that but for Himself, but for what He endured in Gethsemane's garden, and on Calvary's cross, that countless multitude would be, at that moment, lifting up their eyes in torments, and their voices in weeping and wailing, in all the anguish and horror of everlasting despair—Oh ! *then indeed* will the Son of God see *fully* of the travail of His soul, and be *satisfied*, perfectly satisfied with *such* a recompense for even His agony and bloody sweat—even the ignominious and accursed death of the cross !

Reader ! dost thou hope to be one of that rejoicing multitude ? Dost thou hope to mingle thy voice in

that chorus of thanksgiving, from all the assembled congregation of His saints? Oh, then, does not thy heart burn within thee, with a glow of *such* happiness, as in one sense surpasses the bliss of angels, at the thought of what the Redeemer—even thine own Redeemer—will feel, in that day of His appearing! Dost thou not find it very sweet to thy soul to forget for a while all thy sorrows, be they dark and desolating as they may, and thus, by the anticipating power of faith, to enter into the joy of thy Lord?

Now, I cannot but believe, that the habit of thus entering into the joy of our Lord, by the habitual contemplation of the joy awaiting Him on the day of His second coming, would, if we supremely love, confidently trust, and devotedly serve Him, be attended with most valuable and delightful results. It would pour into our hearts a happiness, not merely immeasurably superior to the best the world can give—for this, after all, is but poor praise—but even surpassing, in purity, sweetness, and sublimity, what flows into a believer's heart from any other Christian source; and one which will be perpetually deepening and enlarging, just in proportion as that feeling, in which the very essence of a believer's happiness consists—gratitude to a Saviour-God, is deepened and enlarged.

It would present the Saviour's character under its most attractive aspect, as identifying Himself with His own people, glorified in their glory, rejoicing in their joy; and this, when realized, must endear the Saviour to our hearts; stir up within our souls the depths of every generous and grateful affection towards Him;

increase our cheerful trust in His loving-kindness, and our cheerful contentedness with *all* His appointments, even though some of them may be very agonizing to flesh and blood; because we could not at one and the same time believe, that, in the day of His appearing, He will rejoice in witnessing, and bestowing on us the blessedness He himself purchased for us with His own blood, and yet that He could now take pleasure in witnessing, much less appointing, our sufferings, *unless so far* as He designs them to be instrumental, in making us meet to be partakers of the triumphs of that day. And *such* a view of our trials goes far to enable us to welcome them with joyful salutations, saying to them—"Blessed are ye, for ye come in the name of the Lord!"

And when we consider what a sanctifying influence this habitual contemplation would exercise over our character and conduct; because, if we cordially rejoiced to anticipate our dear Redeemer's joy, we could not, without palpable inconsistency, forbear as cordially to rejoice, by every means in our power, to be instrumental in promoting it—(and oh! what a life of holiness and watchfulness over ourselves, and of zeal and labours of love towards all around, would *this* produce)—and when we further reflect, how all these prospects, with their accompanying influences, are associated peculiarly with the day of Christ's second coming, we may see a probable reason, why in Scripture this day is so prominently exhibited, as the object to be constantly present to the believer's view—the hope to be constantly treasured in the believer's heart!

CHAPTER IV.

PROBABLE REASONS CONTINUED.

11.—The contemplation of the second coming of the Son of Man is calculated to give the fullest development, and most enlarged enjoyment, to another most distinguishing, and delightful sentiment of the believer's heart—namely, the disinterested love which he bears to all whom his Redeemer loves, and the disinterested delight which he derives from the blessedness of all whom his Redeemer has blest. This sentiment constitutes one of the most discriminating marks and loveliest features of the Christian character.

There is joy in Heaven, over one sinner that repenteth—joy among the angels of God—and that joy is shared by every member of Christ's family upon earth, to whom the recovery of that repentant sinner is known. And thus every additional wanderer that is gathered into the heavenly Shepherd's fold—every child of God that the believer sees walking in the sunshine of the divine countenance, rejoicing in the comforts of the Holy Ghost—every fresh convert,

(whether gained from the ranks of nominal Christianity, or heathen superstition,) that is added to the number of those who, like himself, love the Saviour now with unutterable love, and will rejoice before Him with joy unspeakable for ever, pours another and another drop of purest happiness into the Christian's cup of bliss !

Sweeter to him, than language could express, is the thought, that his Father's House is a House of *many* mansions—that the multitude who shall surround the Throne with everlasting Halleluiahs, is a multitude *no man could number* !

But though, by thus identifying himself with all the members of Christ's mystical body, the believer is enabled to appropriate all their happiness, and enjoy it as his own, still, from the constitution of the world in which we dwell, this very sympathy with the feelings of all the family of Christ, while it opens to the Christian joys the worldling cannot know, equally becomes the channel of sorrows, from which the worldling altogether escapes. Because, however ready—delightedly ready, the believer is to rejoice with them that do rejoice, still in this our wilderness world, the abode of sin, and its inseparable attendant sorrow, he is far, far oftener called upon to weep with them that weep.

Here indeed his sympathizing tears are continually called forth—now for some dear child of God, weeping, like Peter, over some bitterly-remembered sin, by which a Saviour has been dishonoured—now, for some mourner, weeping, like the sisters of Lazarus,

beside the grave of one, whose death has drawn over earth's hopes of happiness, a cloud that shall never pass away.

One of the hallowed circle, within which all his Christian affections are centered, is sorrowing, like Mary, at the Saviour's sepulchre, because she has lost the happiness she once enjoyed, in the presence of the Lord, and she knows not where to find Him. Another is in tears, like David, because sinners, for whose salvation he pleads importunately with his God, will neither keep the commandments of God's law, nor accept the invitations of His love.

Oh ! it is a world overflowing full of lamentation, and mourning and woe ! Sin has cursed it—sorrow has deluged it—death has flung his appalling shadow over it—and though, unappalled by that shadow, saved by the blood of Calvary from the curse of sin, and sheltered in the ark of peace from the deluge of sorrow, the children of God can travel along, with cheerful resignation, to their heavenly home—still, when the sorrows of those they love, (in addition to their own,) press heavily on their hearts, the most resigned are often ready to take up the pathetic language of the Psalmist, and exclaim—“ Oh ! that I had wings like a dove, for then would I flee away, and be at rest ! ”

But whither shall the spirit flee, in search of rest for its harassed feelings, wrung and wearied with the sight of the abounding sorrows of the beloved family of God on earth ?

To the morning of the resurrection—the day of the second coming of the Son of Man, when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to wipe away all tears for ever from their eyes !

Yes ! the spirit must urge its flight onward to *that* day, before it can find a spot whereon to rest its wearied wing, if it desire one, from which it can survey the Church of Christ in possession of full, perfect, and unchangeable purity, peace and joy, in all the security and splendor of the church triumphant ; resting from the toils of conflict—crowned with the crown of conquest, and arrayed in the robe of glory.

Thus the generous spirit of the Christian character is expanded, by the believer's habituating himself to connect his own prospects of happiness for eternity with those of the whole Church of Christ—the whole family of the redeemed.

It will not answer for this purpose, that he should habitually rest on the contemplation of his own deliverance, at death, from all the assaults of sin, and all the sorrows of mortality ; because, if the day of his deliverance be not the day of Christ's appearing, he must, while himself released from sin and suffering, leave the Church of Christ upon earth still struggling in the awful and agonizing conflict of her militant state—assailed by enemies from without, and weakened by divisions from within ; while some of its very dearest members must be left by him, to mourn over the separation from one they most fondly loved, with all the lonely anguish of a widowed

heart, or all the desolating bitterness of an orphan's sorrows, or the, perhaps, deeper agony, with which the bereaved parent mourns for a beloved child, who was leant upon as the stay and comfort of life's declining years.

And who, that has deeply imbibed the unselfish spirit of the gospel of Christ, so that he almost shrinks from the prospect of any happiness opening on himself—if his enjoyment of it must, by separation, inflict acute agony on those hearts to which his own, for years, has responded, with the fondest and most faithful affection, who, of such a cast of character, (and what real Christian, who is like-minded with Christ, is not such?) does not feel that it is almost selfish to desire to depart, and rest his own wearied head on a Saviour's compassionate bosom, and enjoy in that Saviour's presence such blessedness as cannot on earth even be conceived, when he looks on the dear circle of home, where his smile has for so many years shed the sunshine of happiness all around, and reflects how the cloud of sorrow will overshadow that beloved circle, when his gladdening smile beams on it no more!

Look at that youthful bride—she has just pledged her vows of wedded love to the object of her heart's first and only choice—and he is every way worthy of her fondest affection. Her parents have brightened her union by their approving smile, and hallowed it by their solemn benediction—and these have been ratified on high by the smile and blessing of a covenant-God. Why, then, does that cloud hang darkly

on her brow? Why are her eyes dimmed with tears? Why, on such a joyful morning, does sorrow seem to have intruded on the spirit of that happy bride?

She is going to leave her first, her hitherto dearest home!—the home of her infancy—her childhood—her riper years—the treasured repository of ten thousand dear and tender recollections;—to leave it, *for ever*; for the home of him, to whom she has united herself, is in a distant land, far, far beyond the seas.

Oh! then, is it any wonder that, when parting with all the beloved objects of her heart's first home, so many remembrances of the parental love that has watched over her from infancy, and the sisterly affection which has shared and sweetened all her joys and sorrows, since first she felt a sorrow or a joy, crowd on her memory, and appeal with such irresistible power to her heart, that though she loves him to whom she is plighted with the fondest love—though the scene of domestic happiness opening to her view, is as sunny as her heart could desire—still, when for the last time she is folded in her beloved parents' arms, or presses her weeping sisters to her breast—oh! is it, I say, any wonder that, even on her joyful bridal morning, sorrow steals over the spirit of that happy bride—and a shade of sadness hangs on her brow—and tears of anguish are mingled with her tears of joy?

Is it not even thus, that though the spirit of a believer dwells with unspeakable delight upon the thought, that when it leaves its earthly tabernacle, it shall be united to the heavenly bridegroom, the Lord

Jesus Christ, whom it loves immeasurably above the dearest objects of its earthly affections, and feels sweetly assured that He has prepared for it a home, immeasurably happier than the happiest ever enjoyed on earth, even a home in His Father's house in heaven—still, still, it cannot part from all the precious objects of its long-loved earthly home, without acutely feeling the pangs of separation from those, who have sympathized in all its joys and sorrows, and ministered to its comfort and happiness, with the most endearing and unslumbering affection, from life's earliest years.

Will He, who has given to the human heart all its tenderness, condemn such sorrow? Or will He, who wept beside the grave of Lazarus, be angry at such tears?

May we not rather, in this sorrow and these tears, discover another gracious reason, why that kindest Father of all mercies, who so affectionately desires, in the tenderness of His love, to spare His children all unnecessary pain, has preferred to direct their views to the day of His Son's second coming, rather than to the day of their own death, as the event on which their thoughts and desires should *abidingly* dwell?

For while it equally presents, under far more glorious circumstances, the prospect of being with the Lord, what a contrast does the former present to the latter, when viewed in connection with those we love in Christ!

Instead of a day of separation, and agony, and

death, the day of the appearing of the Son of Man is to all, whose love for each other has been exalted and hallowed by His smile, a day of happy meetings—a day of blissful reunion for eternity! No more parting pangs!—no more last looks of speechless anguish—no more irrepressible bursts of tears, when that saddest of all earthly sounds lingers on the expiring lips, pronouncing the last *farewell*. *Farewell*, that word of woe, in which ages of suffering seem concentrated, shall never be uttered by the glorified followers of the Lamb, after they meet, on the morning of the resurrection, at the right hand of Him that sitteth upon the throne; but they shall meet there to part no more, but rejoice together for ever in the presence of the Lord.

3. We come now to consider our subject, in connection with the believer's personal prospects of happiness and glory.

In a system of divine truth, exhibiting such exquisite adaptation to the constitution of human nature as the gospel, it would form a strange and anomalous defect, were there no provision made for that leading passion of the human heart, by which, (more perhaps than any other,) the movements of the complicated machinery of our moral frame are directed, its impulses regulated, and its energies sustained.—Need I add, then, I mean hope?

But the Gospel is chargeable with no such neglect. Its God is revealed to us as “the God of hope.” Its precious contents were written “that we might have hope;” yea, that we may “abound in hope,” and the

Christian is described as one "rejoicing in hope"—and oh! what a blessed hope is the Christian privileged to cherish, as his inheritance through Christ, who is his hope! Unlike the cheating hopes of the world, it will never disappoint, for it is a hope of eternal life, eternal blessedness, eternal glory, which God, that cannot lie, hath promised. Unlike the withering hopes of the world, it will never die, for it partakes of its divine Author's nature, and, like Him, is full of immortality!

Like the pillar of fire, which guided the Israelites of old through the desert, it brightens the believer's pathway through this world's wilderness, gilding the darkest gloom of his night of sorrow—and the deeper that gloom, the brighter appears the radiance of this celestial light. Nor will it cease to shine upon his heavenward path, till it has conducted him to the termination of his earthly pilgrimage, and his spirit has entered on the promised rest, that remaineth for the children of God!

Yea! and even in that blissful abode of the emancipated spirits of the redeemed of the Lord, hope is even there, the bright morning star, which illumines, with celestial splendor, the beautiful scenery of the Paradise of God: and there will it continue to shed on the soul its gladdening beams, till, like the star which guided the wise men of old, it shall have fulfilled its divine destination, and rest, for eternity over the Throne, on which the Son of Man shall sit, in the day when He appears in his glory!

This is the believer's blessed hope, which looks

not for its full accomplishment till the appearing of the great God our Saviour. All the bright promises of the gospel converge to this event—here all its scattered gleams of glory are concentrated, and shine with amazing splendour.

In the prospect of this day there is provision made for the fullest development of the most enlarged, the loftiest anticipations, which the most aspiring hope can form, or even the most capacious heart, however covetous of happiness, can desire.

For whatever be the form of happiness on which the believer delights to dwell, whether it be to see the Saviour in full possession of the joy set before Him, for which He endured the cross, or to see the Church in full possession of her promised glory, or to see himself in full possession of all the privileges of his purchased inheritance—whether it be reunion with all he has loved in Christ, or the combined society of the innumerable company of angels, and all the countless hosts of the redeemed—or whether it be the rolling away of all the reproach he ever endured for Christ, and receiving, in the face of an assembled universe, a crown of righteousness from his Redeemer's hands—all this is associated, in a believer's anticipations of hope, with the day of the second coming of the Son of God !

Seeing, then, that hope has such a magnificent prospect to dwell upon—one, where she can spread her wings for her loftiest soaring, and widest range, connected with the anticipation of this glorious day ; and considering that the salutary influences of hope,

as an animating and sanctifying principle, must be proportioned to the grandeur of its object, can we not discover a reason, stamped with the bright impress of infinite wisdom, for this day being, with such peculiar prominence, continually held up, in Scripture, before the believer's view, to stimulate, encourage, and gladden him in running his Christian race !

Bright, indeed, are the prospects of blessedness, unfolded to the eye of faith, as awaiting the faithful followers of the Lamb, the moment of their entrance on the intermediate state—the abode of separate spirits, released from the burthen of the flesh !

That the soul does not sleep, in dreamless insensibility, while in that state, (as some have vainly imagined, from a misapprehension of passages, which speak, in reference to the body, of the believer's falling asleep in Jesus,) is incontrovertibly certain, from the Apostle's expressed "desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which he knew would be far better than to remain in the flesh ;" and also from his willingness to be "absent from the body, that he might be present with the Lord ;" which, if the soul slept a dreamless sleep, would be utterly impossible, for being unconscious, during its sleep of insensibility, it could not enjoy the presence of the Lord, till it awakened to consciousness again, on its reunion with the body, the morning of the resurrection ; in which case there could be no period, during which a believer's spirit, while absent from the body, could, as to conscious enjoyment, be present with the Lord.

Nor could St. Paul desire to depart to be with

Christ, as *far better*, if, on leaving the body, his spirit was to sink into an insensible state of unconsciousness ; for as he could not then enjoy the sweet consciousness of being the object of the Saviour's love, and of loving Him, however inadequately, in return, how could the Apostle esteem *the loss* of all happiness which he derived, while in the flesh, from this source, as a far better state than he enjoyed on earth !

Oh ! they know nothing of the heart of St. Paul, who think that he *could* have desired to escape from all he suffered on earth, for the sake of Christ, if he must thereby lose all he enjoyed on earth, in the service of Christ !

Or how could a voice from heaven have declared, "Blessed *are* the dead which die in the Lord !" if their blessedness consisted only in utter insensibility, either to pleasure or pain ? Surely it would be as reasonable to speak of the blessedness of a particle of mouldering dust !

It is plain, then, even from these passages, (independently of a host of irrefragable testimonies, that might be adduced from the word of God,) that the soul of the believer, while separated from the body, is both in a state of consciousness, and also of *much higher happiness*, in the immediate presence of the Lord, than it can be in its very happiest condition upon earth, while encompassed with the burthen of a sin-polluted, suffering, and dying body !

Still is the happiness of the intermediate state represented as that of blissful expectancy, rather than

of perfect possession. It does not seem to consist so much in full fruition, as in joyful hope, for it is a state where the spirits of the redeemed are rejoicingly looking forward to the day of the manifestation of the Son of God, as the day of the completion of their Redeemer's triumph—of the Church's glory, and their own.

'Tis true, indeed, the termination, for ever, of the harassing conflict with sin and Satan—the blissful assurance that, from the moment of the spirit's release, it shall never once, throughout eternity, wound a Saviour's love, or deprive itself of the light of His countenance, by one moment's indulgence of a single sinful imagination or desire—the unclouded enjoyment of immediate access to His throne, full manifestation of His glory, and intimate and uninterrupted communion with Himself, with whatever else of inconceivable blessedness, is implied in the expression "being present with the Lord"—all this may well prompt in one who loves the Saviour supremely, and would delight, above all things, to escape for ever from the defilements of sin, and to live uninterruptedly under the direct beamings of the sunshine of a Saviour's smile, may well prompt, in such a soul, the desire to depart and be with Christ, as being assuredly far better than to continue here, amidst the agonizing struggles, and painful alternations of victory and defeat, in the spiritual warfare, with the frequent cloudings of the light of a beloved Saviour's smile!

Still the personal happiness and glory of the

believer cannot be considered complete, till the soul and body, which have participated in the ruins of the fall, shall participate in the triumphs of the redemption, accomplished for His people by the Son of God!

Sin brought a blighting curse on man's body as well as on his soul. This splendid piece of divine workmanship, bearing, so legibly stamped on every feature, the impress of the hand which formed it, became a heap of ruins—the victim of disease, decay, and death. This part of the primeval curse, incurred by sin, must be repealed, before Satan can be entirely vanquished, in regard to the members of Christ's mystical body; and the Redeemer's triumph, in crushing the serpent's head, be indeed complete!

This cannot be fully accomplished, till the dead in Christ shall be raised, with bodies incorruptible and glorious, as their Redeemer's on the morning of the resurrection!

The earthly tabernacle, which like the leprous house of old, had been so infected by the loathsome disease of the unclean inhabitant who once dwelt in it, that it must be entirely razed to the ground, and mingled with the dust, shall, on that morning, be rebuilt—raised anew out of its ruins, in far more than even the splendor and glory, which belonged to the earthly tabernacle of Adam's sinless soul, before the fall. For this, even then, had only the honor of being a suitable residence for a pure spirit—(the likeness to the divine image being, on the morning of the creation, confined to man's spiritual part,) but on the morning of their resurrection, the bodies of the

saints shall be made like unto His, who has united in his own person, the human nature with the divine! Thus the likeness to the divine image will then and for ever extend both to the material and immaterial part of their compound nature—both to the glorified body and the glorified spirit—as, in both, the glorified saints will then resemble Him, who is “the brightness of the Father’s glory—the express image of His person,” and by whose assumption of the glories of the Godhead into a human form, (by an union, never to be dissolved,) everlasting honor has been put even on man’s corporeal frame—and a divine glory flung round it, immeasurably brighter than encircled Adam’s before the fall!

Oh! what a mortification for that malignant spirit, who hates and persecutes the saints of God with such intense and unrelenting rage, to see all his diabolical assaults against them thus issue in his own defeat, dishonor, and disgrace: to see, that by all his malice and machinations, he has only been instrumental in raising them to a more exalted height of glory, than but for him they could ever have attained!

And what a magnificent triumph for the Son of God. What a noble recompense for all the Almighty Warrior suffered in His conflict with Satan, to see not merely His great enemy thus entirely vanquished—the serpent’s head thus crushed under His feet—but even materials extracted from that serpent’s envenomed poison, and deadly sting, for increasing

His own glory, and brightening to all His people the everlasting splendor of their celestial crown!

Is not the hope, thus linked with the day of Christ's appearing, well entitled to be called, by way of eminence, the believer's blessed hope? And seeing what exalted, purifying, and comforting influences must emanate from the constant cherishing of such a hope, can we wonder that such a prominent station should be assigned to it, in the scriptural exhibition of the gospel scheme?

And now when we glance back retrospectively at the substance of this and the preceding chapter, surely, unless my judgment much deceive me, we have seen some satisfactory reasons for the prominence which we have proved to be given, in Scripture, to the second coming of the Son of God, as the grand stimulating motive for the Christian's watchfulness, constancy, and courage, in fighting the good fight of faith—the grand animating hope to support and cheer the Christian's spirit, amidst all the toils and tribulations of his earthly pilgrimage.

We have seen how the habitual contemplation of this event keeps the Saviour himself continually before the view, amidst associations, and in an aspect, most powerfully calculated to exalt Him in our esteem, and endear Him to our affections—and to teach us to appreciate, at their just value, the utter emptiness of all this world idolizes, and the inestimable preciousness of His great salvation!

We have seen how it is further fitted to develop to their fullest extent, and make instrumental in imparting

their highest happiness, some of the peculiarly distinguishing, noblest, and loveliest features of the Christian character, both as regards the Redeemer, His redeemed people, or the believer's personal hopes of happiness for eternity! We have seen how all the most glorious promises and prospects of the Gospel point to the day of Christ's appearing, when they are all to receive their full accomplishment! How then, and not till then, the mediatorial glory of the Redeemer will be complete, and He shall see *fully* of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied! how then, and not till then, the collective glory of the Church will be complete, and all her assembled members will be united, as one glorified body to their glorified Head! how then, and not till then, the personal glory of each individual member of that church will be complete, and the work of redemption, in their behalf, be seen to be worthy of a God to have accomplished!

We have also remarked, when contrasting the scene of unclouded glory, and unbounded blessedness, thus opened to our view, by the prospect of the day of Christ's manifestation, with that presented to the eye, by the day of the believer's death, how though the latter be indeed to him a glorious day, yet is there a surpassing glory in the former, which transcendently excelleth; and how the former is free from all those clouding anticipations of pain, and agony, and separation, and decay, and death, which are connected with the entrance on the state of preparatory rest and blessedness, which faith is privi-

leged to behold, as reserved for the believer's spirit, when released from the burthen of the flesh. And as these painful associations (however the believer is privileged, through Christ strengthening him, to triumph over all tormenting fear of *them*) must, from the very constitution of our nature, exercise something of a repelling influence over our thoughts and feelings, we have endeavoured to show, that there are unquestionable traces of the divine wisdom and the divine benignity, manifested in directing our *habitual* anticipations to a scene, where, to a believer all is attractive—bright—glorious—blissful—without a single darkening, or alloying association of sorrow or suffering from any source, to dim the glory of the prospect, presented to the view, or damp the ardor of desire for its immediate, and everlasting enjoyment.

CHAPTER V.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS.

HAVING thus adduced some of the more striking scriptural testimonies, concerning the second coming of the Son of God, and suggested some probable reasons for the prominent station assigned to its exhibition, in the development of the Gospel scheme, I would now proceed, according to our proposed plan, to derive from the subject some of those practical inferences, the enforcement of which stamps on this all-important doctrine its paramount and peculiar value. For the more attentively we study the word of God, the more deeply will we be convinced, that the *ultimate* design of the religion of Jesus, to which the revelation of every doctrine it unfolds is distinctly subservient, is to mould the character into a conformity with the Saviour's, and to regulate the life by those essential principles of righteousness which are at once the transcript of the mind, the announcement of the will, and the indispensable qualification for the enjoyment of the service and presence, of a righteous God.

If then the second coming of the Saviour could not be made powerfully instrumental towards the attainment of this object, we may feel convinced such a station as it occupies would not have been given to it, in a scheme which has been revealed to us, for the very purpose of "teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live righteously, soberly, and godly in this present world," being conformed in all things to the image of the Son of God, who being "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners," (as to any participation in their sinful pleasures or pursuits,) hath herein left us an example, that we should follow His steps!

That the glorious doctrine we have been considering is pre-eminently fitted to subserve this purpose, we have already in part proved, when bringing forward the testimonies of Scripture on the point. The subject, however, deserves to be considered more attentively in detail.

1. The first practical inference I would draw from this subject is, that it supplies a most valuable test, by which we may judge of the validity of our claims to the character, privileges, and hopes of a *Christian*, using the term, not in its loose worldly acceptation, but in its strict scriptural sense.

We have seen that in the scriptural delineation of the character, a Christian is represented as one who "loves the appearing of the Son of God," who is "waiting for the coming of Christ"—"looking, yea, longing for the Saviour from Heaven"—hastening unto the coming of the day of the Lord—animated

by "that blessed hope, even the appearing of the God, our Saviour;" and from the influence of this hope, "purifying himself, even as He is pure!"

Reader! can you find in *this* delineation of the Christian character, any, even the faintest, resemblance to your own? I do not ask you, if you have attained to any advanced measure of conformity thereto; but can you discover even a trace of likeness to the features, which we have seen to be sketched by the Saviour's, and His Apostles' hands? Do you love, with any measure of affection, or wish for, with even the lowest degree of desire, the appearing of the Son of God? Or has this blessed hope ever once shed even a single beam of its purifying, its gladdening, or its comforting influence over your soul?

Reader! weigh these questions well, I affectionately entreat you; for, oh! believe me, you are deeply, because you must be everlastingly, interested in the result!

What may be your character, I know not, but this I do know, that if you are not a child of God, that is, if the Lord Jesus Christ be not the object of your supreme affection; if you do not esteem Him as the pearl of great price; if you have not rested on Him, on His merits, the whole weight of your eternal hopes; and if to promote His glory be not the primary purpose of your life, then, however I may be ignorant what is the event to which you are looking forward, with the most joyful anticipations—what the day, whose approach you most eagerly long for, or what the hope, which most brightens to your view

the visions of futurity,—of this I am assured, on infallible authority, that *that* event (whatever it may be) is *not* the second coming of the Son of God—that day is *not* the day of the Lord—that hope is *not* the blessed hope of His appearing!

Yea, further, I am assured, that if *all* the desires, which have ever been cherished by human hearts, from the day that Adam ate of the forbidden tree up to the present, were this moment unveiled before my view, I would not find, in one solitary instance, that a cordial desire for the second coming of the Saviour had ever been harboured, as a welcome guest, or even admitted, with pleasure, as the visitant of an hour, by any ungenerate human heart!

And among the myriads of wishes, that have been uttered by the lips of the children of men, through all their successive generations, and with all their inexhaustible variety of character and tastes—never, *never once* was there found breathing on the lips of any but a child of God, the wish—“Oh! that the Son of God were come in His glory! Why—why does He delay His coming! why thus tarry the wheels of His chariot! Come, come quickly! *even so* come, Lord Jesus!”

Reader! if such a distinguishing desire of the believer be a stranger to thy soul—if the blessed hope, which purifies and gladdens the Christian, has never purified thy spirit, or gladdened thy heart—if there be no trace in thy character of features thus shown to be peculiarly characteristic of the children of God, would it not be well seriously to consider,

what is the cause of this difference between the scriptural delineation of the Christian character in these particulars, and your own experience ?

Should not this excite your deep solicitude, and solemn self-examination, whether you do really love, trust in, and desire to glorify Jesus, as your own all-sufficient Saviour-God ?

But perhaps you will plead that the subject is new to you—that it has never before been thus brought before you—and that, therefore, your never having felt any desire for the second coming of the Saviour, does not invalidate your claims to the character of a Christian.

Well, then, however strange it may be that, if you have been in the habit of attentively studying the word of God, you should have so entirely overlooked an event, with which the most precious promises, the most glorious prospects, unfolded in that blessed Book, are so closely linked, let us now bring the matter to an issue ; by which, if you are honestly anxious to discover the real state of your mind and heart on this subject, you cannot fail of doing so !

It is the opinion of many sober-minded expositors of Scripture, who have deeply and devoutly studied its prophetic pages, that the second advent of the Son of God is drawing very near. Some think that the day of his appearing is just at hand—that the Judge is at the door !

Now, I am not here engaged in considering, how far this opinion is borne out by scriptural statements.

My only object at present, reader, in alluding to

this opinion, is to give increased force to a supposition I wish to make, by which I would desire you to bring to a decisive test the question I have proposed, whether you would really wish that the Son of God should immediately appear in His glory—whether you can *now*, when the subject *is* brought before you, contemplate this event, with feelings of humbly tranquil expectation, if not triumphantly joyful hope.

Suppose that some day, while engaged in your ordinary pursuits or pleasures (whatever they may be,) on suddenly looking up towards heaven, you beheld the sign of the Son of Man, coming in the clouds, revealed in flaming fire; or that some night, you were startled out of your sleep by that great cry—“Behold! the Bridegroom cometh! go you forth to meet Him!”—oh! look into your heart, and honestly ask the monitor within, with what feelings would you look upon *that sight*, or listen to *that cry*? Would you gaze on the descending Saviour, with emotions of joyful triumph, or agonizing terror? Would you listen to that great cry with unutterable joy, as announcing the approach of your long-desired dearest friend, coming to take you to Himself, that where He is, you should be for ever; or with unutterable horror, as proclaiming the arrival of the avenging Judge, coming to pass on you a fearful sentence of everlasting condemnation? Would the blast of the archangel’s trumpet, if it were this hour to proclaim that the day of the world’s dissolution was come, sound in your ears as the funeral knell of all your

hopes, and of all your happiness; or as the sweet tone of the jubilee trumpet, proclaiming that the hour of your complete redemption had arrived, and the restoration of the forfeited inheritance, which was lost to you by sin, but recovered for you by a Redeemer's death?

But above all, I would fasten your thoughts now on the object, on which, with exclusive gaze, your eyes will be fastened, in the day of the appearing of the Lord from heaven, for this will bring your real state of feeling on the subject to the most decisive test. I do not then ask you, with what emotions you will behold the awful spectacle, which in that day a distracted and dissolving world will supply; for even the saints of God, though safely sheltered in the true ark, will not be able to behold, without emotions of deep awe, and holy, though not harrowing fear, the deluge of fire, raging round the ark, and, in its flood of flames, burning up the earth, and all things that are therein. It is not, therefore, the awful accompaniments of the day of the Lord, on which I would wish you now to fix your thoughts, because it is not on them that I believe your eyes will, in that day, be fixed! No; there is *one object* on which will then be concentrated the undivided gaze of all the created beings, throughout the universe—of all the inhabitants of heaven, earth, and hell; for—"Behold! *He* cometh with clouds, *and every eye shall see Him.*" Yes, every eye, in that day of His revelation, will see *Him*, with as absorbing, as exclusive a gaze, as if

there were no other object visible throughout the boundless creation of God.

The heavens will pass away—but it will not be the departing heavens; the earth will be on fire—but it will not be the burning earth; the elements will be dissolved—but it will not be the dissolving elements, on which all eyes will then be fixed. No. It will be the Saviour—the Son of God—the Judge of quick and dead. Every eye shall see Him, and Him alone, and, in His countenance, read what will fill each heart with all the bliss of heaven, or all the horrors of hell.

His own people—those who, amidst the world's scorn and persecution, loved and honoured, confided and gloried in Him, while on earth—shall see Him smiling on them—shall feel, by that smile, that amidst all the terrors of the surrounding scene, they have nothing to fear—and, pointing to Him, shall exclaim to one another, in a transport of holy joy, “Lo! this is our God! we have waited for Him; and see! He is coming to save us, with a complete, an everlasting salvation! Let us rejoice, for the long-promised, long-desired day of His glory, and of ours, at last is come!”

His enemies—those who on earth rejected and despised Him, and practically said—we will not have this Man to reign over us, *they* shall see Him—frowning on them; and feel, by that frown, that they are irrecoverably lost for ever! and in the phrenzy of despair, will call on the rocks to fall on them, and the

mountains to cover them—for the day of the wrath of the *Lamb* is come, and who shall be able to stand before Him? Yea! I do verily believe, that rather than encounter the angry glance of an insulted Saviour's burning eye, those who have here despised Him will, in that day, be eager to plunge into the lake of unquenchable fire, as hoping to find even its flames a kind of horrible refuge from the yet more appalling horrors of the Saviour's frown!

Oh! reader, if these words fill thy soul with terror, do not, I conjure thee, fling down the book in disgust, or seek to drive away the awful subject from thy thoughts. It is no frightful picture of the imagination I have drawn. As surely as the Lord liveth, and as surely as the Bible is the word of God, and all its contents are unmixed and everlasting truth, so surely shalt thou witness the scene, here presented to thy view!

The Son of God may not come, in visible manifestation, while thou art living on the earth; but death, His messenger, must come ere long, if He does not come Himself, to summon thee to appear before Him!

Behold! (whether a little sooner or later, can be the only difference,) behold he cometh—He cometh with clouds, and thine eyes *shall see* Him! Thy body may have been consigned to its bed of earth, and there have mingled with its kindred dust; but this shall not hinder thee from hearing the voice of the descending Judge; for, behold! “the hour is coming, when all that are in the grave shall hear His

voice, and shall come forth—they that have done good, to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation.”

Reader! unto which resurrection shalt thou come forth from thy grave? “resurrection of life,” or “resurrection of damnation!” Oh! what words are these! Are you indeed a reasonable being? Do you believe the Scriptures to be a revelation from God, and that He is a God of truth? Have those words been uttered by the lips of eternal truth, when it appeared on earth embodied in the form of Jesus Christ? If these things be so, then in the name of reason, of Scripture, and of God, I would ask you, can you be content to remain indifferent, or even doubtful, whether, in that tremendous day, when all that are in their graves, shall hear the voice of the Son of God, *you shall yourself* come forth to the resurrection of life, or the resurrection of damnation!

Do not, (I conjure you, for I would plead affectionately with you for the life—the eternal welfare of your immortal soul,) do not allow Satan to persuade you, even to postpone the consideration of this subject to a more convenient season, much less to banish it altogether from your mind.

Out of the countless myriads of lost souls, who will lift up the voice of weeping and wailing for ever and ever—there is not one, perhaps, who did not, at some period of his life, resolve to repent and attend to the concerns of his immortal soul, at *some more* convenient season!

Behold! now is the *most* convenient season—for

now is the accepted time ! now is the day of salvation !

As to banishing the subject altogether from your mind—Oh ! I do hope, reader, there is not such madness in your heart. The spell that Satan has flung over your spirit must be powerful indeed, if he has succeeded in persuading you to make such a deliberate covenant with him, to secure your own eternal condemnation !

If you have formed such a fearful resolution, let me ask you, what do you propose to gain, by banishing from your mind altogether the subject of the second coming of the Son of God ? the account which you *must give* Him, when you stand before His judgment-seat, of the things done in the body—the sentence which he will then pass on you—and the eternity awaiting you as the result of that sentence—(mark ! I beseech of you)—the *eternity* of as *perfect happiness*, or as *perfect misery*, as it is in the power of Almighty God, in the fulness of His love, or of His wrath, to bestow or to inflict ?

Does His second coming depend on your recollection of the event—so that, provided you can entirely forget the subject, He will not come to call you to judgment, or to pass on you a final sentence, to fix your doom for eternity ?

Were *this so*, there would be reason, at least, in your determined forgetfulness of the *fast approaching* advent of the Son of God ! But I will not insult your understanding, or waste your time, by dwelling a moment longer on the *only* supposition, which can

rescue your conduct from the imputation of practical insanity !

Let us see then how the matter actually stands.

You are perfectly aware, that whether you will hear, or whether you will forbear—whether you dwell on the subject, or drive it from your thoughts, the event is equally certain ! The Son of Man *will come* in His glory, and all His holy angels with Him ! and then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory—and before Him shall be gathered all nations—and you believe *you* will be one of the assembled multitude, who will then be gathered before the Son of Man !

Then shall He separate them one from the other, with as much ease, and certainty of discrimination, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats—and He will place the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on His left—and you believe He will *place you* either on His right hand, or His left in that day ! Then shall He say unto them on His right hand, “Come, ye blessed of my Father ! inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world”—but unto those at his left hand, “Depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting punishment, prepared for the devil and his angels”—and these shall go away into *everlasting* punishment—but the righteous into life eternal. Now all this you firmly believe—but, as to what part *you* are to take in the proceedings of that tremendous day—as to whether the Judge shall place *you* on His right hand, or His left—whether He shall say to *you*—“Come thou blessed of my Father ! inherit a kingdom !”—or—

"Depart, thou cursed one, into everlasting fire!"—as to all this you really have formed no decided opinion, or expectation—because, in truth, you have never given the subject one hour's serious consideration! You have been so busy, that you could not find leisure for it; or you have been so much amused with various entertaining trifles, that you could not find either time or inclination for it; or you have been so whirled along by the vortex of worldly ambition, that you could not pause, even for a moment, to think about it; or you have been kept in a state of such constant intoxication, by worldly pleasures, that you have never been sober enough, even for one hour, calmly to reflect upon it.

Therefore,—even for such reasons as these—(oh, what a libel on the word)—as to *where*, or *how* you are to spend eternity, you must even take chance—and hope—(you cannot exactly tell why, on any grounds, or no grounds) that all will be well at last—and you shall spend eternity—(oh, can you, in very truth, so outrage God and reason, as really to hope it?) *with God in glory?*

Oh, reader, deal not so madly with your immortal soul. Set not your eternal welfare on such a desperate stake. Seek not to purchase a few hours of respite from foreboding fears, at the extravagant price of the everlasting gnawings of the undying worm. What would you think of the fearful infatuation of the mariner, who, on being awakened out of his sleep, in the midst of a raging storm, with the startling cry, "What meanest thou, oh, sleeper, arise,

and escape; see! the life-boat is at hand—hasten into it, ere yet it leave the sinking ship. Another moment—and you may be too late—the boat will be gone, and leave you to perish”—what would you think of the infatuation of the man, who, on being thus awakened, instead of starting up, and hastening into the life-boat, would prefer sinking into sleep again, and, while dreaming pleasant dreams, be engulfed in the abyss of overwhelming destruction? Oh, imitate not, I conjure you, the desperate infatuation of that man.

Let not your heart cleave to that world, to which you are now so madly clinging. Shattered by ten thousand storms, it is beginning to exhibit symptoms of weakness and decay! and besides all this, it is predicted in the oracles of God, that fire from heaven shall suddenly strike it, and in a moment it will become a burning wreck, and all found clinging to it, when the flash strikes, will share in its destruction, and perish in its ruins! But, see! the life-boat of the gospel is still waiting to receive *you*; oh! hasten into it immediately, for, if one may judge by the portentous signs of the times, the horizon is darkening all around—and the black thunder-clouds *seem* gathering, and some awful manifestation of divine judgment appears ready to burst upon our world.

Instead, therefore, of desperately striving, as if you were determined on your own damnation, to forget the swiftly-coming day of the Lord, habituate yourself to view it, under every aspect in which it is

revealed in Scripture, for each will supply a powerful motive, to persuade you to flee at once into the shelter of a Saviour's arms.

It will be the day when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed—when deeds of unutterable abomination, done in darkness, and concealed from every human eye, shall be blazoned in the light of God's countenance, and proclaimed in the hearing of the assembled universe!—the day when the mask shall be torn off the hypocrite, and he shall stand forth, in all his unveiled loathsomeness, before the gaze of men and angels, the object of universal scorn, abhorrence, and contempt—the day when the self-deceiver shall be fearfully undeceived—when the unsanctified professor shall discover the utter uselessness of a lamp without oil—when the formalist shall feel, terribly feel convinced of the utter worthlessness of all his forms, and the man of mere decorum learn, to his unspeakable confusion, that the outward observances, the heartless drudgery of punctually-performed ceremonies and duties, however much they availed him in the day of man's judgment, will avail him nothing in the great and terrible day of the judgment of the Lord.

Reader, if such be thy character, oh! do not leave it to that dreadful day, to bare to the eye of the universe the secret abominations thou hast so carefully concealed, or to tear off from thy countenance the mask thou hast so long worn, or to drag from beneath thee the false and fatal supports—the ruinous refuges of lies, on which thou hast hitherto been

leaning—but come! come at once to Jesus—throw thine heart open to Him with all its dark deceitful depths of wickedness. Confess to Him all thine iniquities, with all their aggravations. Plead for pardon, through His all-sufficient sacrifice—in His all-prevailing name. Pour out thy soul in prayer for the renewing, purifying influences of the Holy Spirit, to create in thee a clean heart, and to enable thee henceforth to live a holy life; and then, let the day of the Lord come when it will, thou needest not fear, for it shall be to thee a day of glory, of triumph, and exceeding joy.

Again, that day is the day when the divine Master of the House of God shall come to reckon with His servants—to inquire how they have employed the talents He entrusted to them—to address to each those awful words, “Give an account of thy stewardship”—to reward the faithful, in the overflowings of His grace, with an abundant recompense of reward—but to cast the unfaithful and unprofitable into outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth for ever.

Hast thou been an unfaithful steward, or at best, an unprofitable servant? Hast thou employed thy divine Master’s talents, rebelliously, against His interests, or fraudulently, for thine own advancement; instead of consecrating them all to the object for which they were entrusted to thee—the promotion of His glory? Or hast thou merely wasted His goods—folded up thy talents in a napkin, and buried them in the earth? Hast thou spent the allotted time of

thy stewardship in slothfulness and inactivity, doing nothing for Him who has done so much for thee?

Oh! treasure up no more wrath against the day of wrath. Repent, while yet the Master delays His coming; repent of all thine unfaithfulness and neglect; ask His forgiveness for all the past, and His grace to enable thee, for all the future, honestly, gladly, gratefully, to devote to Him and His glory all the talents He has committed to thy charge; that in the day of His coming, to take account of His servants, He may say to thee, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

Surely, when you reflect, that if you, *even now*, after all your shameful treachery, dishonesty, ingratitude, and contempt, surrender up yourself, and all you have, and are, to his service, *this* is the salutation—*this* the greeting he will give you, in the day of His appearing, (not an allusion, you see, to former unfaithfulness or sloth!)—Oh! can you hesitate for one moment, to embark all your energies, affections, and resources, from this day forward, even for ever, in *such* a Master's cause?

Or again, view that day, which with sure, though silent course, is drawing near, as the day when the Lord Jesus Christ shall be revealed from Heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of his Son—when.

He shall come to possess Himself of the kingdom so dearly purchased with His own blood, and shall take to Himself his great power, and reign—and

having first collected all his loyal subjects, all His beloved saints around him, as participators in his glorious triumphs, and assessors with him in his righteous judgments, on that day, shall then issue the awful command—"Those mine enemies, who would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither, and slay them before me!" and they "shall be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."

Oh, reader, if *this* be thy character, and impending doom, if thou hast thus refused to bow beneath the sceptre of a Saviour's love, or to obey the gospel of a Saviour's grace—yea, further, if thou hast been yet more daring—more desperate in thy rebellion—if thou hast scoffed at the saints, and spurned the salvation of the Son of God—if thou hast done all within thy reach, by the petty yet powerful persecution of ridicule and reproach, to hinder the progress of his cause, and harass the spirits of his people—oh, then, I conjure thee, while yet in mercy He forbears to strike, and waits, (amazing patience,) waits to be gracious, even unto thee—cease this moment from waging, any longer, such an unnatural—such an unequal warfare. Thou canst not eventually injure Him, or His cause—but thou canst eternally destroy thyself. Strive not then any more against the Almighty—provoke not any further, by persecuting His people, the terrible vengeance of Him, who considers himself insulted by every insult they receive; but at once fling down at his feet the arms

of rebellion, and enlist, without a moment's delay, under the banners of His cross ; that when the sublime vision, revealed in the apocalypse, shall be realized, and the divine Conqueror, crowned with many crowns, and clothed with a vesture dipped in blood, comes to tread the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God, instead of being dashed to pieces by His rod of iron, or dragged in chains at His chariot wheels, in that day of His righteous wrath, it may be thy glorious destiny to form part of the triumphal train of crowned conquerors, who shall then be privileged, as having overcome by a Redeemer's grace, sit with Him on His throne, even as He also overcame, and is set down with His Father in His throne.

CHAPTER VI.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS.

THE second practical purpose to which I would apply our subject, is, that it affords a most decisive standard, by which a believer may judge of the state of his affections towards the Saviour, whether they are, as they ought ever to be, lively, and progressive, or beginning to decline, and tend towards decay!

Connected, as we have observed the day of the second coming of the Son of God to be, with His seeing fully of the travail of His soul, and being satisfied, if we have been taught by the Holy Spirit to feel His inestimable preciousness, and our boundless obligations to His redeeming love, whenever our affections toward this Divine Benefactor, springing from the sense of all we owe Him—(Oh! what that one word *all* includes)—are in a healthful and happy frame, the attitude of our spirits will be that so beautifully described by the Apostle—"looking, longing for, hastening unto the coming of the Lord"—anticipating the day of His appearing, with all

holy ardour of intense desire, as delighted with the prospect of the glory, the blessedness, we will then see enjoyed by our best, our most beloved Friend—yet having this ardent desire chastened, and preserved from the inquietude of feverish feelings, by a sweet and sober spirit of patient waiting for Christ!

On the other hand, if, from any cause, our love to our Heavenly Friend has begun to wax less warm, or to exercise a less supremely attractive influence over us—if any object of earthly affection has begun, imperceptibly, to ensnare us in the dangerous fascination of an idolatrous attachment—if any vision of earthly enjoyment has begun to entice our souls away from the glorious prospects of celestial bliss, then, by an inevitable consequence, will our ardent longings for the day of Christ's appearing begin to abate—the eye of our souls will be no longer looking constantly and eagerly for this glorious event—the flattering hope, whose lying promises of satisfying felicity we have foolishly believed, will begin to be substituted for the believer's "blessed hope!" and when, either in the page of prophecy, or by some startling dispensation of Providence, or some fresh portentous sign of the times, the Saviour's voice seems to be heard, calling out, "Behold! I come quickly!" our hearts will no longer answer, with a joyful burst of holy desire—"Even so, come Lord Jesus!" but the voice will sound in our ears as an alarming thunder-peal, and the words at which every affection and aspiration of our re-

néwed nature ought to thrill with reverential rapture, will only fill our heart with emotions of inquietude and fear!

Surely, when the appearing of the Saviour is not fervently desired by us, though numbered among His own redeemed and beloved people; when the anticipated approach of the day of His glory is contemplated, not with delight, but alarm—when, if it depended on *our* choice, our wishes would retard it, even for one hour—Oh, surely, then, our hearts cannot be right with our Saviour-God! His love cannot be reigning, as it ought, in supreme sovereignty on the throne of our affections—we are beginning to leave our first love—the principle of declension in our spiritual system has begun to work—and we would do well to take heed, and search diligently, and pray fervently, that the commencing mischief may be checked, before the offended Saviour be provoked to hide from our backsliding souls the light of His countenance; or be compelled, in mercy and faithfulness, to visit us with some sore chastisement, and thus to scourge us back, with the rod of affliction, into the path of close walking and communion with Himself, from which we have so foolishly, so ungratefully wandered.

We may derive some interesting illustrations of the truth of this position, from the relationships of earthly affection; for be it ever remembered, that the Saviour has condescended to image His infinite love for His people by those relationships, for the special purpose of intimating to us, that He, who is above all things

jealous of our affections—He, whose demand from each of us is—"Give me thine heart," (which demand not being answered by an unreserved surrender, He would not accept, could we offer it without the heart, the surrender of our whole life to His service.) He who values nothing in us but our love; and values *that* as the most precious treasure which earth can present to Him—He wishes that we should concentrate on Himself all that is most pure and precious in those endearing relationships of earthly love, which then assuredly fulfil their noblest destination, and yield their sublimest satisfaction, when they are made subservient towards assisting us to form a fuller and more delightful appreciation of His love for us, and to establish within our hearts a more entire concentration of our love, in its fullest strength and sweetness, on His blessed Self!

Let us then follow up the train of thought thus suggested. The Lord Jesus Christ styles Himself the Friend of all His people! "Ye are my friends," (He says in His infinite condescension,) "if ye do the things which I command you!"

Sweet proof of our friendship for the Saviour, that we should keep those commandments of His, which are only (such happiness is linked with obedience to them,) so many expressions of a Saviour's love.

Now suppose we had a friend, who had lavished on us even the millionth part of the love that Jesus has shown us, and that we had long been parted from this beloved friend, and that, at length, a promise reached us of his speedy—perhaps his immediate re-

turn—and suppose, yet further, the day of his arrival was to be one, when he should bring to a successful termination some arduous enterprise, in which he had been long engaged, and on which he had expended all his wealth, and all his energies, and that he was then to reap the full reward of years of toil, and suffering—Oh, tell me, if, as the day of his promised return drew near, we did not look forward to the moment of meeting our benefactor and friend, and seeing him in full possession of the recompense of all his labours and sorrows, with feelings of unmingled and unbounded gladness of heart, must there not be something radically wrong in the state of our affections toward that professedly beloved friend?

But if we suppose yet further, (to bring the parallel more close,) that during his absence, that friend had been unceasingly thinking of us, and labouring to promote our welfare, and was returning to enrich us with the wealth he had acquired, and to make us participators in the triumph of the glorious enterprise, which would be crowned with complete success, on the day of his return, that *this* was the very object our friend had in view in coming to us, *this* the prospect to which, in absence, he had delighted to look forward—Oh, what must we think of ourselves, if, under such circumstances as these, the day of our friend's arrival was not anticipated with intense gratitude and delight?

I will not waste one moment in the application. Reader, how does it tell, as to the state of thy heart towards Jesus Christ?

Now I cannot but regard it as a matter of peculiar importance, that we should be thus supplied with so decisive a test of the state of our affections towards the Saviour, because as all is right or wrong *here*, all is right or wrong in our spiritual system !

Let me, however, guard against my meaning being mistaken. I am far, indeed, from wishing to insinuate, that our acceptance with God rests on so insecure and uncertain a foundation, as the ever-varying state of our spiritual feelings, or is left to be perpetually fluctuating with their perpetual fluctuations. Were this the case, what believer could ever enjoy an hour's settled peace of mind, if his hopes of salvation were to be constantly rising or falling, as the thermometer of his spiritual feelings rose or fell ? No, no, blessed be God ! those who have fled for refuge to the hope set before sinners in the Gospel, have a stronger, a surer foundation on which to rest—an immoveable and indestructible rock—even the unchangeable faithfulness, divine atonement, and everlasting righteousness, of Jehovah-Jesus—an all-sufficient and unfailing Saviour-God.

Still is it of immense importance to us, if believers, to watch the progress or declension of our love to the Redeemer ; because it is both true, that our highest happiness will always be proportioned to the degree of intensity, with which this holy love burns, for he as yet knows nothing of a believer's hidden life before God, who does not know, that his heart is always happiest, when its love to the Saviour is strongest,) and it is also true, that while the Holy

Spirit is, by His Almighty power, the efficient promoter of all growth in godliness, every Christian grace will keep pace with the progress of this divine principle—"grow with its growth, and strengthen with its strength," or, (melancholy contrast,) decline as it declines.

When our affections towards the Saviour are in a vigorous frame, when the grateful sense of all His love is fresh and sweet to our souls, and the thankful remembrance of all His benefits is vividly and abidingly cherished, then is the whole spiritual system in a sound and healthful state—then are all the means of grace gratefully prized and pursued, as means of delightful communion with Him! *then* does the very sight of sin horrify and disgust us, from the hideous aspect it wears of loathsome ingratitude to Him; then does the soul, clinging fondly to the affecting recollections of love and sufferings, alike unfathomable by finite faculties, indissolubly twined around the very words, Gethsemane and Calvary, instinctively shrink, when viewing sin as the cursed cause of all His agonies, from even the casual contact of its defiling touch—then are all the commandments of Jesus most cheerfully obeyed, for he that loveth Him, keepeth His commandments, and finds in doing so, that they are, when obeyed from love, their own reward—then are all His chastening dispensations received with a sweet spirit of thankful resignation—then, like Mary, we love to sit at His feet, and listen to the words of eternal life, as they flow from His gracious lips—or, like the pardoned

penitent, who loved much, because much had been forgiven her, we delight to pour, as it were, the most costly ointment on His sacred feet—to lavish on Him whatever we possess most precious, and deem it all too little to prove the greatness of our love; and the only value which we can see in what we have most valuable, is that we can turn it into a tribute of our gratitude—a testimony of our affection, for our honoured, our beloved Master, Saviour, and Friend.

It were superfluous to dwell on the painful contrast, which is exhibited, when love to the Saviour has been allowed to decline in a believer's soul.

Suffice it to observe, that results, the very reverse of those we have detailed above, are experienced and displayed, utterly destroying, while the season of declension lasts, the believer's happiness, and deeply dishonouring the adorable Redeemer's name!

Is not this enough to prove, of what immense importance it is for Christians frequently to examine, by the decisive test, which, (as we have seen,) the day of His second coming supplies, the state of their affections towards a Saviour-God!

But here, methinks, some trembling soul is ready to exclaim—Oh, were I certain that I was an object of the Saviour's love, and that, therefore, the day of His appearing would be to me, not a day of terror, but of triumph, then would I wish and watch for its approach, even as the sleepless sufferer, wearied with tossings to and fro through the night, wishes and watches for the first streak of dawning light, which ushers in the long looked-for morning.

But I am afraid that I have not an interest in the Redeemer's love—how then can I desire the day of His coming, when I cannot but fear that it may prove to me a day of unutterable despair! To such I would say—If you honestly wish to know the real truth of the case, let me deal freely and faithfully with you, and, with God's gracious help, I will endeavour to assist you, by suggesting a few simple, but solemn and searching questions. May the Holy Spirit bless them to your conversion or consolation, as your case, in the sight of a heart-searching God, may require!

Now, then, I would ask you—Does your doubtfulness, as to your acceptance with God, arise from your being still undecided, as to which Master you will serve—God or the world—the Saviour or Satan—for you *must choose between these* contending claimants. You *cannot* serve them both! you must be *either* a Saviour's servant, or Satan's slave!

In *this* case, I would address you in the spirit of the piercing expostulation of the prophet of old—“How long halt you between two opinions? If the Lord Jesus Christ be God—the God you in your heart prefer, follow Him—but if Satan, then follow him!”

Decide between *these* rival candidates for your immortal soul—but decide quickly—lest, while you are hesitating what decision to make, the angel of death, or the Son of God himself should suddenly appear, and decide the point *for you*, in a manner that will leave you no alternative, but the horrible one of

spending the ages of eternity, in cursing the hour of your birth !

Decide quickly, then, I again conjure you ; but before you make your final choice, contrast what the Saviour and Satan—or (what means the same thing,) the world—Satan's ally, will do for you, on those four momentous occasions, so affectingly grouped together in one of the most solemn invocations of our incomparable litany—and may the Eternal Spirit enable you *this* day to decide, as you will wish to have done, in the day of Christ's appearing !

In all time of your tribulation the world will forsake you ; in all time of your wealth, the world will corrupt you ; in the hour of death, it will leave you to die in despair ; and at the day of judgment, to perish under a sentence of final and eternal condemnation.

In all time of your tribulation, the Saviour will comfort you ; in all time of your wealth, the Saviour will preserve you ; in the hour of death, He will speak peace to your departing soul ; and at the day of judgment, He will invest you, as the blessed of His Father, with the inheritance of a kingdom of eternal glory.

Are you a rational being ? and do you *still* hesitate, which of these two Masters to choose as your own ?

But perhaps you will say, this is not your case—you are too well aware of the world's worthlessness, to devote yourself to its service—too fully convinced of its faithlessness, to confide in its smile.

Well, then, have you mistaken the very nature of the salvation of the Gospel? Are you trying to reconcile peace of conscience, the hope of heaven, the friendship of the Saviour, with the indulgence of some one bosom lust—some one besetting sin? Is there some Herodias, that, though you will do every thing *else* gladly, at the Saviour's bidding, you *cannot part* with, even for His sake—some Agag, which, though you will sacrifice every thing *else*, at the command of God, you are resolved to spare—some cherished idol, which, like the young ruler, you cannot bring yourself to fling away, and follow Jesus.

Then I faithfully warn you, so long as this is the case, you cannot find peace, at least solid, scriptural peace. The only peace which, under such circumstances, you can hope to enjoy, is that which Satan will most gladly give you—even such peace as the Vampire is said to give his slumbering victim, whom he fans, with his dark wings, to keep him in a profound sleep, while he is draining his heart's blood. But real peace—the peace of the Gospel—the peace of God—the Saviour will never give you, on *such* terms. His name is called Jesus, because He *saves* His people *from, not in*, their sins. All the glory of that name would be darkened, if He would stoop to be such a Saviour as those would wish, who wish to retain at once His salvation, and a single particle of sin. I do not, in truth, conceive that devils themselves could invent a more horrible blasphemy against the Son of God, than to insinuate that He left His throne of glory, and stooped to the degra-

dation and death of the cross, for the purpose of making the indulgence of sin compatible with the hope of salvation, and thus becoming a fellow-worker with Satan, in perpetuating and extending the empire of rebellion against God ; and expending all His energies, and even His life itself, in accomplishing a scheme, by which, with impunity, His Father's righteous government might be insulted, and His holy laws disobeyed.

If *such* be the Saviour you desire to have, believe me, reader, you will never find *such* a Saviour—I should rather say, *such* a patron of iniquity in the Son of God.

But neither does this, you say, apply to your case, as there is not a single sin, which you are conscious of a desire to spare. Yea, so far from this, you desire as earnestly to be delivered from the dominion of sin, as from its condemnation ; to be freed from its pollution and power, as much as from its punishment. In fact, you have always found sin its own severest punishment, so that you are convinced you can only be saved from Hell, by being saved from sin, which itself, in its essence and influence, is Hell ! But you are so overwhelmed with the sense of your own utter unworthiness, that you dare not indulge the hope, that you can be an object of the Redeemer's love.

Unworthiness ! and does the Bible any where speak of a class of sinners, worthy of being saved ? In fact, does not the expression involve a palpable contradiction in terms ?

A *rebel deserving* of pardon!—a criminal deserving of forgiveness!—and a sinner deserving of salvation! are all terms equally stamped with self-evident absurdity.

Besides, it would be well for you to reflect, that *if* you were not *unworthy*, that is, if you were not a sinner, (for they mean the same thing, you *could not* have any scriptural warrant to believe, that you were one of the objects, whom the Son of God came into our world to save; for He has Himself expressly told us that, “He came *not* to call the righteous, but *sinners* to repentance;” and the context of this passage, as well as the illustration employed, that “the whole need not a physician, but they that are sick,”* plainly proves that our Lord means, in this celebrated text, not the self-righteous, but the really righteous; so that His declaration obviously amounts to this, “Were there any of the children of men, like the angels of heaven, truly righteous, free from sin, they would no more require me as a Saviour, than a man in sound health requires the physician’s skill.”

Sweet and consolatory assurance for the soul, conscious of its spiritual maladies!—precious encouragement to go at once to the divine, all-merciful, and infallible Physician of souls!

But, you say, it is not merely the general feeling of unworthiness that drives you to despair, for you are aware that “there is none righteous, no not one;” and that “the Lord Jesus Christ came into our world to save sinners;” but your sins have been of

* Matt. ix. 12, 13.

so peculiarly deep a dye, they have been attended with such peculiarly frightful aggravations, that—the sacrifice of God, manifest in the flesh, cannot atone for them, and even *His* blood cannot blot them out.

Indeed! Is *this* the ground of your despair? Yes, this it *must* be, if you say that you are earnestly desirous of pardon, *but* that your sins are too great, too aggravated to be pardoned; that is, they are beyond the reach of the atoning blood of the Almighty Expiator of sin to blot out.

You may call this humility—God calls it unbelief. You may imagine it pleases Him—He tells you it affronts Him. You may regard it, as doing the highest homage to His infinite holiness—He regards it, as offering the deepest insult to His beloved Son. You may think it proves what a just sense you entertain of the depth of your depravity, the greatness of your guilt, the vileness of your sins; He considers that it only proves what a dishonouring *disbelief* you cherish of the depth of His compassion, the riches of His grace, the sufficiency of His salvation.

But, you say, it is not His *power* to save you that you doubt. You believe that the Redeemer is the Mighty God, the Lord God Almighty, and that, *therefore*, if all the sins, which have ever been committed on earth, could be concentrated together in your person, and charged to your individual account, the blood that was shed upon the cross could wash, with infinite ease, the accumulated mass away, nor leave one particle behind, to appear against you in the day of judgment.

But still, (oh ! how unbelief is for ever objecting that hateful *but* to the plainest and most precious promises which a faithful God can give,) you doubt the Redeemer's *willingness* to save you.

His willingness! that is, if I understand you aright, you are willing to be saved by Him, in his own appointed way—saved from sin itself, as well as from its curse, and to give Him all the glory of your salvation ; *but* you think *He is* unwilling thus to save you.

I do verily believe this insult, *if possible*, affronts Him more deeply—and wounds His loving heart more acutely, than even the former. I believe there is no affront we can offer Him, at which the Son of God is more displeased, than at His mercy being doubted, and his promises of pardoning mercy, and willingness to save, despairingly disbelieved !

Doubt the Redeemer's *willingness* to save you ! Can this be true ? Son of God, dost Thou deserve this, at any sinner's hands ? Is *this* the reward of all Thy tears, and groans, and agony, and death ? After *all* that Thou hast done, after *all* that Thou hast suffered, to convince sinners of Thy willingness to save them, oh ! can it be that a single doubt is left lingering in the breast of a single sinner, that desires to be saved by Thee ? Shall the throne of heaven, which Thou didst leave for our sakes—shall the manger of Bethlehem, where Thou wert laid in infant helplessness, in Thy love for us—shall the garden of Gethsemane, where that mysterious bloody sweat was wrung from Thee, when Thy soul was agonizing for our salvation—shall the cross of Calvary,

where Thou didst pour forth thy blood in unutterable anguish, even unto death, to redeem us from the everlasting agonies of eternal death—Oh! shall *all* these plead for Thee, in vain? Shall *all these* fail to convince us of Thy love—Thy ready, Thy rejoicing willingness to save us?

If so—then, (I say it with reverence, and surely Thou wilt not be angry with Thy servant for saying,) even Thou, Almighty One, canst give no stronger, no fuller demonstrations of Thy love. Even Omnipotence (forgive me if I speak foolishly) can do no more! If we persevere in *such* unbelief, our salvation is impossible—we must, Almighty Saviour as Thou art to all who believe, *we must* perish everlastingly.

Can it be otherwise, if we make the blessed Jesus a liar; and such unbelief gives the lie, not merely to the testimony, on behalf of His love and willingness to save *every* sinner that comes to Him borne by His life and death, but also gives the lie to the plainest, and oft-repeated declarations of His lips!

Out of the crowd of passages that throng upon the mind, it is difficult to select the strongest, or, sweetest, where all are so sweet, so strong; but I will here confine myself to three.

His own invitation—Come unto *Me*, *all* ye that labour, and are heavy-laden, and *I will* give you rest.^m

His own promise—“*Him* that cometh unto me, *I will* in no wise cast out.”†

* Matt. xi. 28.

† John vi. 37.

His own complaint—"Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life!"*

Now I can only say, if in the face of *such* an invitation, *such* a promise, and such a complaint, you doubt the Redeemer's willingness to save you, you make Him (I actually shudder while I write it) *insincere* in His invitation—*unfaithful* in His promise—and *hypocritical* in His complaint.

And *this* is the opinion, which you *practically* prove that you entertain of the Saviour. Yes! *you*, who can repose the most unlimited confidence in the professed truth and affection of a fellow-worm, and would deem it the deepest insult to an earthly friend, whose love had been fully proved, to doubt for a moment the sincerity of his professions, the faithfulness of his promises, or the veracity of his word; and yet, while *thus* treating the Son of God—the Heavenly friend, who laid down his life for you, you wonder that He does not fill your heart with peace and joy!

I have dwelt the more anxiously on this point, because, if you are honest in the statement of your own feelings—if you are *sincerely desirous* to be saved by the Son of God, in His own revealed way, and *sincerely believe* that he is *both* willing and able thus to save you, I really cannot understand why your heart should be disquieted within you, as I cannot conceive any interposing scriptural obstacle, to hinder you, for one instant, from the

* John v. 40.

enjoyment of the fullest peace and joy, which the gospel can impart to a pardoned sinner's soul.

But so strangely ingenious is unbelief in inventing excuses for its dishonoring doubts of God's love in Christ, that perhaps you will derive an additional motive for despair, from that very contrast at which I have glanced, and which *ought* to *shame* you into the most confiding and grateful affection towards Saviour-God!

Perhaps you are inclined thus to argue! "Oh! it is this very contrast between what I feel for the objects of earthly affection, and what I feel for Christ, which makes me tremble for my state. When I think how warmly I love, how willingly I confide in *them*, and then look into the state of my feelings towards *Him*, I cannot indulge a hope that I am one of His own beloved people; for I cannot believe, that *if* I were, my heart could be so warm, so confiding, so grateful in its love towards those who have (I do feel and confess,) done nothing for me in comparison of what He has done, and, at the same time, be so cold, so hatefully cold, distrustful, and ungrateful towards Him."

Now, really this is a most unreasonable method of proceeding! First, you will not believe, (though warranted, yea, commanded, by the uniform testimony of the whole word of God to do so,) that the Lord Jesus Christ is *as* willing, as he is able to save you! and then, you complain, that you have not towards Him those feelings, which nothing but a belief of His love can inspire: and you make the want

of those feelings, which nothing but faith can produce, a reason why you should not have the faith, which would give them birth! That is, you expect to have the fruit of faith, even peace with God, without having faith itself—you expect to gather the precious fruit, before you have planted the tree, which can alone bear that fruit—you expect to reap an abundant harvest, without having sown the seed, which is to yield that harvest.

Yea! your conduct is yet more unreasonable than even this. “Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?”—yet you hope to gather the grapes of the vine of God—the rich sweet grapes of Christian gratitude, peace, and joy, from the thorny bramble of unbelief—you plant, in your heart, the poison-tree of disbelief of a Redeemer’s love, and then you come, when it has brought forth its deadly fruit, and look to find its branches loaded with the precious fruit of the tree of life.

Oh! remember, I conjure you, gratitude to the Saviour, in the contemplation of His sufferings, can only be excited in your breast by your believing, that in the endurance of those sufferings, He had thoughts and purposes of loving-kindness towards yourself! While you disbelieve or doubt this, whatever else you may feel, *gratitude* to the Saviour, in the very nature of things, you cannot feel! This sentiment can only be awakened by your cordial faith in His love, firmly realizing the conviction that He was “wounded for *your* transgressions, and bruised for *your* iniquities”—thankfully appropriating

the pardon of sin, and all the other inestimable benefits, purchased by His blood—shed for sinners; and enabling you, with humble confidence, and devout affection, to exclaim—“He loved me, and gave Himself for me!”

Such faith alone can kindle and cherish the holy flame of gratitude to a crucified Saviour in your heart! Now does not Jesus, think you, desire that you should feel such gratitude towards Him? And must He not therefore equally desire, that you should repose that faith in His redeeming love, and that trust in His all-sufficient sacrifice, from which alone, as you have seen, such gratitude can flow?

To convince you, more unanswerably, that the sentiments of which I speak are exclusively the offspring of a cordial faith in Christ's love, just make the following supposition—Suppose the Saviour were, while you are reading this, to reveal Himself to you, in visible manifestation, and smiling on you with all the divine compassion of a Saviour's smile, to address you in those sweet words—“Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace!” What would be the result?

Methinks I hear you exclaim, Oh, then indeed I would be at peace, peace with God, with the world—with myself; then would the weight, that has so long pressed, like a mountain, on my heart, be in a moment lifted off; and after that weight was removed, all earthly anxieties, and sorrows, which now appear such a heavy load, would *then* seem lighter than a feather! *Then* indeed my soul would magnify the

Lord, and my spirit would rejoice in Jesus, when I could call Him "God *my* Saviour!" *Then*, if after He had breathed peace into my inmost soul, by those blessed words—assuring me that my sins were forgiven, if He were then to ask me—"Lovest thou me?" I *feel* that I would be able to answer, without one moment's hesitation—"Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee!" and the love with which my heart would then overflow, would produce all those precious fruits of hatred of sin, delight in His service, submission to His will, and zeal for His glory.

Now then let me ask you, and oh, weigh the question well, *whence*, think you, comes the suggestion, that prevents you from feeling this sweet peace, and joy, and grateful love to Jesus?

Comes it from the Holy Spirit? What! from that Spirit, whose office, delight, and glory, it is to glorify the Saviour, by making Him precious to the sinner's soul; to fill the heart with peace and joy, in *believing*, and make it abound with *hope*, through Christ, the sinner's only hope! Can that Spirit, who was sent to *convince* the world of *sin*, *because* they believe *not* on Christ, have suggested to you those unbelieving doubts of the Redeemer's love towards yourself, which have thus deprived you of peace, and comfort, and kept your heart, if not altogether alienated from the Saviour, yet altogether estranged from that sweet spirit of confiding grateful affection towards Him with all its blessed results, which is the only recompense He asks from you, for all He has suffered on your behalf!

Oh, when you contemplate the effects of your unwarrantable doubts of the Redeemer's willingness to give you an interest in His salvation, can you hesitate to perceive and confess, that "an enemy hath done this!" Must you not feel certain, that you should trace these unbelieving doubts to that accursed spirit, who fears nothing so much as your cordial belief of a crucified Saviour's love, because he knows that such a belief emancipates his victims from the debasing slavery of sin, and bondage of fear, in which it is his diabolical delight to keep them chained; and sends them forth at once, unfettered by a sin or fear, to walk abroad with all the conscious dignity of God's own free-men, in that glorious liberty with which Christ makes his people free!

Why will you then tenaciously cling to doubts, which rob the Saviour of His glory—your own soul of peace—and afford gratification only to that malignant spirit, who hates Jesus, and hates every soul, in which he sees the love of Jesus shed abroad by the Holy Ghost!

But perhaps you have yet one answer left to excuse your unbelief—you cannot give yourself faith—"it is the gift of God."

Most true, for faith is indeed a good and perfect gift; and we know that every such gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, even from Him, of whom his well-beloved Son has declared, that "if we, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to our children, how much more will

our heavenly Father give good things, (and is not faith a good—a most precious thing?) to them that ask Him.”

Go, then, even this moment, go, and take this promise with you to your chamber, and there kneel down, and plead it in prayer before your Father in heaven, and ask for its fulfilment to yourself, in the name, and for the sake, of His beloved Son.

But ask for it *earnestly* and importunately, as one who is pleading for his life; seek for it deeply and diligently, as one who is searching for hid treasures; knock humbly but perseveringly, as one who is privileged, with humble boldness, to say to God—“I will not go away, until thou bless me;” and, believe me, no one was ever yet known (and you will not be the first,) *thus* to plead, and yet to plead in vain; for the lips of eternal Truth have declared, that of such petitioners, “Every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth, and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.”

The mouth of the Lord hath spoken this gracious promise; the word of God has recorded it for your comfort; the faithfulness of Jehovah is pledged for its fulfilment, to every humble and sincere suppliant.

Go, then, plead it in prayer; and God Almighty give thee this day an answer of peace.

CHAPTER VII.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS.

THE *third* practical reflection I would make, connected with our subject is, that it supplies a most valuable directory for the regulation of a believer's conduct, in all the various relationships and duties of social or domestic life.

Indeed, I do not know how a simpler or shorter yet more sufficient rule, on this point, could be laid down, than one which our subject suggests, and which, if honestly and prayerfully applied, could never lead a child of God astray, or even leave him doubtful as to what path to pursue. The rule is this—while trusting simply for the acceptance of our souls, and our services, in the Redeemer's righteousness, to be always in such a frame of mind, and such an employment of time, as we would wish to be found in, if suddenly surprised by the personal appearing of the great God, our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

To keep His faithful servants continually in this state, seems to have been the great practical end at which our blessed Lord aimed, in His reiterated an-

nouncements, with such impressive solemnity, of the uncertainty of the time when He would come, in power and great glory.

This, too, appears to be the import of all those striking images, which are derived from the peculiarities of Oriental costume or customs, and which, when fully understood, by an acquaintance with those peculiarities, are seen to possess remarkable force and beauty, in illustrating this state of unceasing watchfulness, and readiness for the coming of the Lord.

Such are the injunctions—"To have their loins always girded, their lights always burning, and themselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he shall return from the wedding."*

Such the manifest design of that singularly beautiful and impressive parable of the ten virgins ;† which, to mark more emphatically His especial purpose in that parable, (so far as His faithful followers—the wise virgins—are concerned,) He closes with that most solemn exhortation, which, I would to God, were for ever sounding, not merely in the ears, but on the heart of every professing Christian in our day—"Watch, *therefore*, for ye know neither the day nor the hour, wherein the Son of Man cometh."

And when we view this parable in connection with the one immediately following—that of the talents—we will find, as it appears to me, that they contain the two component parts of the rule to which

* Luke xii. 35, 44.

† Matt. xxv. 1, 14.

I have referred—namely, that the frame of mind, and employment of time, should be always such as we would wish to be found in by the Lord, at His coming.

The parable of the virgins seems to apply to the frame of mind, both by the expression in the 10th verse—"they that were *ready* went in with Him to the marriage"—and also by the significant intimation, that it was the distinguishing characteristic of the wise virgins, that they had oil in their lamps. Such a supply of divine grace in their hearts, as kept the lamp of faith and hope continually burning, and all the graces of the Christian character shining with a steady and serene lustre; and this most beautifully illustrates the frame of mind, in which a believer should watch and pray to be continually kept, in the expectation of the ardently-desired arrival of the Lord he loves.

The parable of the talents seems to apply, with equal force, to the latter part of the rule—the employment of our time—and intimates that every moment of it should be honestly and zealously devoted to the service of our divine Master—trading with the talents He has entrusted to us, for the advancement of His own glory; primarily, from a grateful desire to glorify Him, who has purchased for us, with His own blood, the inheritance which, on the day of His appearing, shall be given to all His faithful servants; but, subordinately, in the hope of hearing from His lips, in that day, those words of most astonishing condescension and grace.

considering by whom they are uttered, and to whom they are addressed—"Well done, good and faithful servant! thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

The combination of these two parables supplies the most perfect exhibition of the state, in which the habitual expectation of the coming of the Lord should make a believer desirous, above all things, to be abidingly preserved.

That our blessed Lord manifested a peculiar solicitude, that *this* should be the state in which His people should be unceasingly found, and will therefore regard, with peculiar complacency and delight, all whom He sees cordially desirous and faithfully diligent, in the use of every appointed means, to maintain this state, is undeniable from the especial blessing He has pronounced on those, who treasure up in their hearts His words of warning and exhortation, on this subject, and exhibit their blessed fruits in the attitude of their spirits, the frame of their temper, and the occupations of their life.

* "Blessed," (says He, whose promise is the pledge of all blessedness,) "are those servants, whom the Lord, *when He cometh, shall find watching!*" and then He uses words, through whose veil of mystic meaning we can only catch glimpses of some inconceivable glory, prepared for them, in the amazing riches of divine grace—"Verily, I say unto you, that

* Luke xii. 37-45.

He shall gird Himself, and make them sit down to meat, and will come forth, and serve them!"

Again, after having asked—"Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?" He immediately adds—"Blessed is that servant, whom his lord, *when he cometh, shall find so doing!*" and then follows another wonderful promise—"Of a truth I say unto you—(as if He felt, that what He was going to say would almost exceed the power even of the strongest faith to believe, and therefore prefaces it with peculiar solemnity of announcement)—of a truth I—who am Truth itself—I say unto you, that He will make him ruler over all that He hath!" I presume not to fathom the depth of these mysterious promises; but I see enough, even on their surface, to show me, that there is a blessedness, beyond all that human tongue can tell, or human heart conceive, reserved for those servants of the Lord, whom, *when* He cometh, He *shall find* watching; and doing, in a faithful and grateful spirit, the work He has appointed for them!

Reader, may you and I know, by our own experience, what this blessedness, in its full extent, and everlasting duration, will be!

But He, who perfectly understands the hidden workings of the human heart, has seen it fit, in His infinite wisdom, to subjoin to these splendid promises warnings the most awful, that by thus appealing at once to our hopes and our fears, He might enlist all our passions on the side of His sacred cause, with

which are equally linked, our happiness and His glory !

The Redeemer's voice of awakening expostulation gently warns us of the danger of relaxing from this state of constant watchfulness and exertion, by that affectingly significant expression, in the parable of the ten virgins—that while the Bridegroom delayed His coming, “they *all* (the wise as well as the foolish,) slumbered and slept.” And does not the slumbering state of too many, even, as we trust, sincere Christians, in our day, painfully prove, that the caution would be most urgently called for in every age of the Christian church ?

The Redeemer's voice of warning assumes a louder and deeper tone, in that solemn exhortation, addressed to His own disciples—* “Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares ; for, as a snare, shall it come on *all them*, that dwell on the face of the whole earth. *Watch ye*, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man !”

But the Redeemer's voice of warning bursts on us, as in a thunder-peal, in those tremendous words,† which are rendered yet more awful by immediately succeeding the glorious promise, given to the faithful and wise steward—“But and if that servant say in

* Luke xxi. 34, 35, 36.

† Luke xii. 45.

his heart—My Lord delayeth his coming—and shall begin to beat the men-servants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken—the Lord of that servant will come in a day, when he looketh not for Him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers!”

Seeing, then, that our adorable Redeemer has sought, by such promises and such warnings, to stimulate His faithful followers to strive after the attainment and maintenance of a state of uninterrupted watchfulness, how deep should be our solicitude, how diligent our exertions, to be always kept in a state, which He has thus marked as the object of His especial approbation and delight.

It cannot, surely, therefore, be uninteresting, or, I would trust, unprofitable, to exhibit this spirit of Christian watchfulness, embodied more distinctly in detail. We will accordingly consider the subject, briefly, in reference to our thoughts—our temper—our conversation and reading—the employment of our time—and the use of our wealth.

I.—OUR THOUGHTS.

How would it purify, exalt, hallow, in a word, Christianize *these*, if we habitually strove to cherish *only* such, as we would wish to be found cherishing, were our Lord suddenly to appear!

Need I expatiate on the character of the thoughts which such an anticipation, if realized and acted upon, would alone allow us to entertain, as welcome guests

within our hearts! Need I remark how agonizing on the one hand, it would be, to be surprised by our Redeemer, at His coming, brooding over impure, resentful, envious, repining, or any shape or shade of sinful thoughts—but how delightful, on the other hand, to be found meditating on the Saviour's matchless love, and all the proofs of it He crowded into His life of suffering, and his death of shame—or the divine beauties of His character—or the inestimable privileges of His people, or the innumerable tokens we have ourselves received of His unwearied loving-kindness, sympathy, and care—or contriving some benevolent scheme, by which we might be enabled, in a spirit of grateful affection, to advance His glory, or in his own sweet spirit of divine philanthropy, to mitigate the amount of human misery, and increase the sum of human happiness, as far as our influence extends.

The vast importance of using *such* a standard to regulate our thoughts, and keeping *such* a constant guard over them, will appear, if we reflect on the immense influence, which the thoughts we voluntarily cherish exercise, in the formation of our character, and the regulation of our conduct. Were our thoughts habitually fixed on God, and Christ, and Heaven, how would it tend to impart to us more and more of the character of God, the spirit of Christ, and the temper of Heaven. On the other hand, it is actually frightful to consider, what a terrific series of sinful actions may flow, by natural consequence, from the deliberate indulgence of a

single sinful thought—not honestly and prayerfully resisted, when first flashed on us, either by some external object, the workings of our own deceitful and desperately wicked hearts, or the diabolical inspiration of the author of all evil!

Were the secret history of David's heart fully revealed to us, I doubt not that we would discover, that the foul crimes of adultery and murder, (the two blackest in the catalogue of human guilt,) into which this distinguished servant of God was betrayed, might be traced to the voluntary indulgence of the unhallowed thoughts, which, in an unguarded hour of *unwatchfulness*, were suggested to his spirit, as he walked forth, little dreaming of his danger, that fatal evening, giving loose reins to those destructive guides—a wandering eye, and a wandering heart!

Oh, who that contemplates, in David's history, the fearful extent of transgression, to which even a child of God may be carried, by not prayerfully watching, with unslumbering vigilance, against the first suggestions of sin, will not shrink from even the momentary indulgence of *such* thoughts, as would fill him with shame and terror, were he, in the midst of them, to hear the Archangel's trumpet heralding the approach of the Son of God, coming in the clouds of Heaven, with power and great glory!

And as we live in a world, where we cannot come in contact with a single object, which may not be made, by Satan, a channel of temptation, and source of sin—Oh, how should we resolve, in reliance on divine strength, to place the spirit of Christian watch-

fulness, as a sentinel at the door of our hearts, to question every thought, that seeks admittance there, "whence comes it, and on what errand"—and to admit none to pass the portal, however attractive they may appear, or loudly they may knock, which have not clear credentials, that they come direct from God, or, at least, have the seal of His permission as their passport to our hearts!

I verily believe that a child of God could not adopt a more valuable rule, to assist him in attaining the object of his glorious ambition—perfect purity of heart—and conformity to the divine image; nor a safer test, by which to try the thoughts he ought to cherish, than the one thus supplied by the second coming of the Son of God.

II.—TEMPER.

There is no point, perhaps, in which many even sincere Christians are often more deplorably defective, and exhibit a more deficient, if not distorted delineation of the Christian character, than in the article of temper.

Too many alas! even of the children of God leave the infirmities or irregularities of their natural temper uncorrected, its sourness unsweetened, its roughness unsoftened, its impetuosity uncurbed, or its petulance unsubdued, even after their convictions, habits, and pursuits, have undergone a visible, and we would trust, (though compelled, at times, by these ebullitions of an unsanctified temper, to stand in doubt of them,) a saving change.

The mischiefs of this inconsistency are manifold, and deeply to be deplored. Such, Christians, by these unrestrained exhibitions of a temper uncongenial with the spirit of the gospel, which breathes the very soul of gentleness and love, deprive themselves of much spiritual peace, and joy, and consolation, (for they drive away that dove-like Spirit, who can alone impart them :) disturb the harmony, and embitter the enjoyments, of the domestic and social circle ; bring a deep reproach on the gospel, by giving its prejudiced opponents so much reason to regard it as an inoperative system of peculiar phraseology, exercising no visibly beneficial influence over the tempers of its professed advocates ; and thus involve in suspicion the sincerity of their profession or the soundness of their views. For if the scriptural standard of the Christian character be the Saviour's, and if likeness to Him be the true test of His real disciples, must not an habitually peevish, or proud, or passionate-tempered Christian, be considered as anomalous a contradiction in terms, as a profligate, or profane, or drunken Christian—for is not the spirit of the meek, the mild, the merciful Jesus—the gentle Lamb of God—the lowly, long-suffering, loving Saviour of mankind, as utterly uncongenial with the one class as with the other ?

Reader ! dost thou, in truth, love the Saviour, even as His own people love Him, and desire to glorify His dear and honored name ? And dost thou labour under the sore trial of a temper, which is altogether in its natural state, unlike thy Saviour's, and by the

indulgence of which thou hast often brought bitter anguish on thine own soul, and deep reproach on thy Redeemer's cause?

While humbled in heartfelt penitence, by the retrospect of the past, resolve that for the future you will watch, and pray, and strive, with especial solicitude and earnestness, to be preserved from ever again *thus* disgracing the Saviour's gospel, and dishonoring His name!

Study His character with especial supplication, that your temper may, by the renewing influence of divine grace, be cast into the very mould of His; and that His spirit of meekness and gentleness, of tenderness and love, of patience and of peace, may henceforth rest on you, and regulate even the very aspect of your features, and tones of your voice, as well as every principle and passion of your inmost soul.

Faithfully apply the rule we have laid down—seek to be always in *such* a temper, internally before God, and externally before those with whom you live, as you would wish the Saviour, if suddenly appearing, to find you cherishing! And, oh! need I say, what horror you would feel at His finding you, were He unexpectedly to appear, with your spirit discomposed, and your features distorted, by the dark broodings, or fierce out-breakings, of an unsubdued and unsanctified temper! Your countenance clouded with sullenness, or your cheek flushed with rage! Anger flashing from your eyes, or bitterness burning on your tongue! Child of that God who is love! Disciple

of that Saviour, who, "when He was reviled, reviled not again, but, as a lamb before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth"—Oh is it in *such* a state, you would wish to be surprised by the sudden stroke of death, or the sudden appearance of the Son of God?

III.—CONVERSATION AND READING.

We may briefly concentrate the application of our rule to those two particulars, in the following simple direction:—

Christian reader! Never hold a conversation, yea, or even utter a sentence, which you would shudder to have interrupted by the sudden cry, bursting on your ears—"Behold the Bridegroom is coming! Go you forth to meet Him!" And never read a book, which you would fling down in terror, if the light of that flaming fire, in which the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven, were suddenly to flash upon its pages.

You know what was the subject of conversation to the two disciples, on their way to Emmaus, the evening of the day when our Lord rose from the dead, especially after Jesus in person joined them, and conversed with them, opening to them the Scriptures concerning Himself! And you know what were the feelings, with which that conversation caused their hearts to burn within them.

Let your habitual converse, whether with books or living friends, be such—such in its substance—such in its spirit—such in its results, and it must be blessed—

whether Jesus hallow and sweeten it only by His spiritual presence and blessing, or come, in person, to turn it into infinitely sweeter converse with Himself, “eye to eye and face to face.”

IV.—THE EMPLOYMENT OF TIME.

What a wise and holy œconomy and diligent improvement of every portion of this precious article, would the honest application of our rule enforce! For what servant of the Saviour would wish to be found by their Divine Master, at His coming, wasting their hours in idleness—leaving the portion of the vineyard, allotted to their care, uncultivated, and exhibiting, in the luxuriant growth of weeds, and the drooping state of all its precious flowers and fruits, the ruinous results of their neglect and sloth!

The value of time, as a talent, for which a strict account will be required in the day of reckoning, is, I fear, adequately appreciated by very few, even of those who know that its most glorious destination, yea, the very purpose for which it is bestowed, is to spend it in the service of the Lord! How few, alas, even of them, so jealously œconomise, and so judiciously arrange it, as not to have reason to mourn over many, many wasted hours, the faithful consecration of which might have produced results, in their own souls, or those of others, that would have furnished matter for grateful joy throughout eternity!

Christian reader! how stands the account, in this respect, between you and your God? Does the retrospect of your past life fill you more with thank-

fulness and joy, or self-reproach and shame? Which-ever it be, resolve that for the future, *far* more than in the past, the motto of your life shall be—"redeeming the time;" and, as a general guide to the mode of occupation, seek that it shall be always *such*, that, if the Saviour were personally to appear, and ask you the solemn question—"What doest thou here, my servant?" you might be able, with cheerful confidence, to look up in His face, and say—"The work, gracious Lord, which love to Thee prompted me to engage in, for the advancement of Thine own glory."

If you are one, whose professional pursuits necessarily mark out for you the chief occupation of your time, the principal apostolical rule for *your* direction is—to be "not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit—*serving the Lord.*"

Nor are you incapacitated for this, by your professional pursuits being of a secular cast, because there is *no profession*, (if not in itself sinful,) in which you cannot serve the Lord, by discharging its duties in the *spirit*, that should ever characterize His peculiar people; by the *principles* inculcated in His gospel; and with the *design* of consecrating to His cause, as instruments for the promotion of His glory, whatever wealth or influence your success in your professional pursuits may be the means of imparting.

This, with a fixed determination never to be so absorbed in professional avocations, as to leave yourself without sufficient time, and spirit, and strength, for the cultivation of personal piety, by devout com-

munion with your God in prayer, and His holy word, and for the faithful discharge of all domestic duties, devolving on you as a child of God—*this* seems the safest *general* rule, that can be laid down in *your* case ; and if you are enabled, by divine grace, to act honestly in its spirit, you might be as well satisfied to be found by the Lord, (were He suddenly to appear,) at your post of professional duty—(*if* there not forgetful of Him, or your *peculiar* obligations, as one of His own people)—as in your closet, pouring out your heart in prayer and praise before your God!

But if you are one, whose time is not thus professionally engaged, and consequently its distribution seems more at your own disposal, and you are doubtful how you can best employ it for the object, to which you heartily desire to devote it, the glory of Him who died for you, I would offer you, in all humility and affection, the following hints for your guidance :

Seek, in the first instance, by fervent prayer, divine illumination and direction. Without this, all inquiry will be worse than useless—the Holy Spirit must be your first, and first-consulted counsellor and guide, or you will inevitably go astray ! Besides, work as you will, you will work, if untaught, unassisted, and unhonoured by Him, *without a blessing* on your labours, (at least to your own soul,) however zealous, unwearied, or even crowned with success to others, those labours may be !

Having then earnestly sought divine teaching and assistance, seek to have a *correct* estimate of the

talents committed to your charge, and the opportunities of glorifying the Saviour, placed within your reach, that you may thus ascertain the extent of accountableness in which you are involved—remembering the principle, which will regulate the proceedings of the day of judgment, that *according* to what is given to each, will it be required of him.

Beware, therefore, of that slothful spirit which would seek an excuse for unfaithfulness and indolence, in the plea of pretended humility. The possession of ten talents (if so many *have been* given to you,) supplies no ground for arrogant boasting over him, who has received but one. No; but it *does* involve the possessor in a tenfold responsibility, from which, in the eye of God, and the reckoning of the great day, he never can escape.

According, then, to the talents entrusted, calculate your means of usefulness, and the consequent arrangement of your time, so as to make all your influence, of whatever kind, bear most directly and efficiently on the advancement of the Redeemer's cause, as far as possible, in this graduated scale of precedence—first of all, in *your own soul*, (this must always be the *primary* object of your solicitude, exertions, and care;) *next* in your own family,* (domestic should

* It is much to be feared, that domestic duties have not habitually assigned to them, in the system of many religious professors of our day, that primary place, which is unquestionably demanded for them, by the voice of God, whether speaking in the tender accents of natural affection, or the authoritative announcements of His written word!

To bring up their children "in the nurture and admonition

always come next to personal duties;) then, among your friends; then your neighbours; next, your native land; and ultimately the whole world.

For though Christian charity should, indeed, "begin at home," and regard the domestic circle as the divinely-appointed portion of the vineyard, where its first and fondest cares should be constantly bestowed, yet is it privileged, and, in our day, enabled to travel to the remotest regions of the globe, and indulge its generous and enlarged sympathy and solicitude, on behalf of the darkest and most distant inhabitants of heathen lands, through the medium of those missionary societies, by devoting to whose management and advancement a fair proportion of his leisure time, a Christian, living in a secluded village of our native land, can be present, as it were, by proxy, in almost

of the Lord;" to watch over the spiritual welfare of their servants, with Christian fidelity and love; and to regulate the conversation, reading, pursuits, and recreations, of the domestic circle, strictly by the principles of the gospel, and singly with a view to the glory of God; these duties of paramount importance are, we fear, too often sacrificed to the gratification of a feverish thirst for wild and novel speculations, or a rambling restless search after religious instruction, which is never digested by meditation, or reduced to practice.

This is to run counter, at once, to the constitution of nature, and the commands of God! By both, *home* is declared to be the proper sphere of the Christian's first and tenderest solicitudes, most watchful care, and most zealous and unwearied labours of love! To the discharge of *its* duties, all others must be made subordinate—if God's blessing be desired to rest upon them! and whatever religious excitement may be enjoyed, or instruction be obtained, *abroad*, by the *neglect* of the *duties* of *home*, will be unattended with profit to the soul, because unaccompanied with the blessing of God!

every portion of the globe, preaching the glad tidings of salvation to those who are now sitting, fast bound in Satan's chains, amidst the darkness of the shadow of spiritual death.

And say, thou that knowest the preciousness of a Saviour's love, is there any employment, in which thou wouldest more rejoice to be found by Him, at His appearing, than while thus endeavouring to extend the knowledge of His blessed name to the remotest ends of the earth? Canst thou, for a moment, doubt, when thou rememberest His own parting command—"Go into *all* nations, and preach the Gospel to *every* creature!" that blessed is the servant whom his Lord, when He cometh, shall find so doing."

Reader! may *this* blessedness abundantly be thine.

V.—THE EMPLOYMENT OF OUR MONEY.

I cannot but believe that the faithful application of our rule would make a decided and most desirable change in the use of this talent, with multitudes even of those now considered the most disinterested and devoted servants of the Lord.

It would be well if we always, before we expended any sum on any object approaching towards a superfluity, were solemnly to ask ourselves—"Is *this* the use of this sum, which in the day of Christ's appearing, I will wish to have made? Will I be able *then* to rejoice in the retrospect of what I am now doing?" It would be well, if frequently, with the eye of faith, we beheld the Redeemer reminding us of Calvary,

and then pointing to the various societies, established for the advancement of His glory, and saying—"Support *these*, for *my sake*"—and when we met with the children of poverty and suffering, lying helpless and friendless, on the way side, in our daily path or walks of charity, we heard the good Samaritan's voice saying to us—"Take care of these, and whatsoever thou spendest on them, when I come again, I will repay thee." And surely, if we habitually contemplated what will be the feelings of *those*, to whom, as having manifested their love to their Saviour, by generous compassion, and liberal relief to *His* poorer brethren for His sake, He, when seated on the throne of His glory, in the day of His appearing, will say, before the assembled myriads of men and angels—"I was hungry, and ye gave *me* meat; thirsty, and ye gave *me* drink; naked, and ye clothed *me*—for inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these *my brethren*, ye did it unto *me*."—Oh! were *this day*, and *this salutation* of the Saviour, continually present to His people's memory, when they were expending their money, how many a superfluity of dress, or furniture, or fashion, would remain unpurchased!—How many a society,* estab-

* Is there not too much reason to fear, what cannot but be most deeply lamented, that the importance of missionary labours is not sufficiently appreciated, even by many of those who know, by their own experience, the preciousness of Jesus and His great salvation?

When we consider His own express command—"Go ye into *all* nations, and preach the gospel to *every* creature"—the imperative obligation on all who love Him, to do *all* that in them lieth for the advancement of His glory, by spreading the know-

lished to glorify Him, which is now languishing from exhausted funds, would raise its drooping head, and with recruited strength, and replenished resources, ride on prosperously in its career of mercy!—How much money, thus redeemed from the indulgences of worldly luxury, would supply the children of God with the means of indulging a far nobler, and surely

ledge of His salvation to the ends of the earth—the affecting appeal addressed to every Christian heart by *six hundred millions* of our fellow-creatures, groaning under the galling bondage of heathen superstition, and enslaved by every cruel and licentious passion, which can torture and debase our nature, into a fearful compound of the beast and the fiend; and then reflect on the inestimable blessings which follow in the train of Christianity—the assured pardon of sin, the renewal of the soul in the divine image, the means of grace, the hope of glory, the peace in life, the comfort in death, the bliss throughout eternity—oh! is it not strange that so many, who, we cannot but believe are Christians in more than name, feel so little interest in the welfare of the missionary cause, and contribute so little assistance, by their prayers, their exertions, or their money, towards its success.

Does not gratitude to Him, who died for us; does not compassion for the immortal souls of millions, powerfully rebuke such unchristian apathy on such a subject, and pathetically plead on behalf of missionary societies, calling on every cordial lover of a Saviour-God to befriend them, with fervency of prayer, and liberality of contribution!

Christian ministers, I conjure you, faithfully answer that call; seek to kindle in the hearts of your people, a warm glow of Christian zeal in the missionary cause; establish in your parishes missionary associations; so may you hope a fuller blessing will rest on your pulpit and pastoral ministrations!

Christian mothers, wives, sisters, daughters, reflect, I beseech of you, on the degraded condition to which your sex is reduced; the barbarous treatment to which it is subjected, in every heathen land. Look at the appalling extent of infanticide, and female suicide which there prevails. Contrast this with the high and

to them more congenial luxury, even the divine luxury of doing good—of pouring the wine and oil of Christian consolation into many a wounded and bleeding bosom—of wiping away the orphan's tears, and making the widow's heart to sing for joy.

I am aware of the difficulties that embarrass this subject, when carried into minute details. I am

holy privileges to which Christianity has raised *yourselves*; the pure domestic happiness on earth; the glorious prospect of eternal happiness in heaven, which *you* enjoy; and oh! will you not henceforth be nobly zealous in this sacred cause, and strictly self-denying in your expenditure for personal indulgences, that you may be liberal in your contributions for the advancement of an object, which must assuredly gladden your hearts with immeasurably deeper, purer, sweeter joy, than any personal indulgences can supply; even the joy of imparting to thousands of your poor degraded suffering sisters in heathen lands, those precious privileges which Christianity has conferred upon yourselves; making them like you, members of happy, because hallowed homes, in this world, and expectants of the perfect happiness of an eternal home beyond the skies.

Christians! of every rank and denomination, I conjure you, by all the obligations you owe to Him, who loved you, and gave *Himself* for you; by all the spiritual peace and joy that you now possess, and all the glory and blessedness you hope to enjoy for ever, by all the unmitigated agonies which now harrow the hearts of hundreds of millions of your fellow-creatures, plunged in all the horrors of heathenism, and all the foretastes of heaven which each of those hearts will feel, if once the love of Jesus is there shed abroad by the Holy Ghost; by all the sufferings which the Son of God endured for you, and all the happiness which, by those sufferings, He has purchased for you, I conjure you to endeavour, by earnest prayer, by zealous exertions, the employment of consecrated talents, and the generous liberality of truly Christian love, to promote the triumph of that cause, with which is so intimately linked the advancement of the glory of a Saviour-God, and the temporal and eternal happiness of the human race!

aware how impossible it is, to fix any definite standard of universal application, by which to determine the precise boundary line between what is necessary, and what is superfluous—a point, which must be left to the decision of every individual Christian, judging with an enlightened conscience, agreeably to the *scriptural* standard, as in the sight of that God to whom, and not to his fellow-Christians, each will have to give an account of himself at last.

I am also well aware how much easier it is to take away carpets and curtains from our drawing-rooms, or ornaments from our dress, than to take away uncharitableness from our spirits, bitterness from our tempers, censoriousness from our tongues, and, worst of all, pride, even that most hateful species of it, spiritual pride, out of our hearts.

Still, after all this has been conceded, I cannot but persuade myself, that the grateful remembrance how generously the Son of God poured out His blood for them, would, if constantly cherished, and consistently acted upon, *constrain* His people more generously (to say nothing now of His dearly-purchased and inalienable *right* to such a testimony of their gratitude,) to pour out their wealth for Him ; and if there should be an error in the way of extreme, oh ! must we not desire to see it on the side of that right-hearted Christian, who, after having, by its hallowed use, laid up almost all his wealth as treasures in heaven, has withdrawn from the social circle, that he might not countenance by his presence self-indulgent

habits, which he feels the Scriptures condemn, rather than on the side of those half-hearted, inconsistent professors of an evangelical creed, who declaim against the world, and talk most eloquently of Christian self-denial, amidst a style of furniture, dress, equipage and entertainment, which can answer no conceivable purpose, but to pamper "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life."*

* 1st John, ii. 16.

CHAPTER VIII.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS.

THE fourth practical use I would make of our subject, is to observe, that a realized and habitual anticipation of the second coming of the Lord is powerfully efficacious to teach the child of God, contentment amidst the most distressing, and consolation amidst the most afflictive circumstances, in which he can be placed, in the course of his pilgrimage, to the place of his eternal rest.

I.—CONTENTMENT.

I know nothing that would more effectually enable us, if we are indeed children of God, to adopt, from the heart, the language of the Apostle when he says, "I have learned in whatever state I am, therewith to be content," (and he, who can say *that* with truth, has learned the secret of true happiness,) than habitually to anticipate the judgment on *all points*, which we will entertain in the day of Christ's appearing; and to view and value all objects *now* as we will unquestionably view and value them in that day.

Were *this* standard of judgment constantly present to our mind, and employed to regulate our desires, and solitudes, how many feverish anxieties would be allayed, how many fretful complainings silenced, about objects, fancied to be so replete with happiness, while unattainable, but found to be so utterly unsatisfying when attained.

How many things, that, when viewed through the magnifying glass of earthly passion, appear peculiarly splendid, or attractive, would the light of the day of Christ's manifestation, when strongly flashed upon them by a vivid and realizing faith, strip of their false glare, deprive of their dangerous fascination, and reduce to their real insignificance.

What veriest trifles, when viewed in that light, are most of the things which a sin-deceived world, blinded by Satan, idolizes? Beauty? what is it but a flower, that blooms, and withers in a day! Glory? a flash that glitters for a moment and is gone! Worldly distinctions? an empty bubble! Worldly applause? a passing breath! Riches? if not sanctified in their use, the merest dross! Domestic happiness—though immensely more valuable than all the rest—yet, if unhallowed in its enjoyments, and therefore not the pledge and prelude of eternal happiness—Oh, what is even this to the children of the world, when viewed in the light of the day of their death, or of Christ's appearing, but a fleeting dream of bliss, from which the slumberer will start up to the horrible certainty of an eternity of waking woe!

Child of God! beware of overvaluing now, what

you will deem so utterly valueless in the day, when Christ, who is your life, shall appear, and you hope to appear with Him in glory.

Waste not one ardent feeling of your heart, one precious moment of your time, in eagerly desiring and endeavouring to grasp, what in the prospect of that day, when the Sun of Righteousness shall rise, in cloudless splendor, on the world, appears as unsubstantial and evanescent as the shadows of the night, that flee away from before the brightness of the rising sun! Set your heart with intense, with undivided affection on those things, which will not merely bear the light of that day to be flashed upon them, and still appear substantial and blessed realities, but the more strongly that light is poured upon them, their excellence and lustre more resplendently shine forth, and will thus shine for ever. The beauty of holiness, the crown of glory that fadeth not away, the distinction of being an heir of God, a joint-heir with Christ, the approbation of Him that sitteth upon the Throne, the unsearchable riches of Christ, the inexhaustible fulness of joy for evermore!

Here, believer, here are objects worthy of your warmest wishes—covet *these* more eagerly, than ever miser thirsted for His gold; aspire to *these* more ardently, than ever ambition aspired to a throne; pant after *these* more longingly, than ever voluptuary panted after his debasing gratifications. Here your desires *cannot* be too ardent—too enlarged—for here, (if I may so speak,) is an ambition, here is a covetousness, here is a voluptuousness, which God Him-

self has inspired, and which God Himself will delight to satisfy !

But as to all earthly objects, remember the apostolic injunction, “ Let your moderation be known unto all men—the Lord is at hand.” Be content with whatever *measure* of *these* your covenant-God sees fit to mete out to you, by His providential arrangements—rest satisfied it is precisely the proportion of them, which he knows to be best for you, both in reference to His glory, and your own eternal welfare. Should not that measure, when it satisfies *His* love, who could not be satisfied with lavishing on you, as a token of His love, less than His own Son ! oh, should it not abundantly satisfy your heart ?

Learn then, to appreciate, at their just value, those external distinctions of rank, and riches, and titles, and such like vanities, which the world so idolizes, but on which Jesus, by the station He voluntarily assumed, while he tabernacled on earth, poured such contempt.

Seek to acquire, and habitually to exhibit, such a judgment and temper concerning these things, as are becoming the followers of Him, whose glory, like His kingdom, is not of this world—Him, who, though the Almighty Creator and Ruler of the universe, yet, when in amazing love to our sinful race, He visited our world, was born in a stable—had not on earth where to lay His head—laboured, as a carpenter, for His own support—performed all His journeys, when going about doing good, as a way-

faring traveller, on foot—and when in fulfilment of prophecy, He had to make His public entry into Jerusalem, was obliged to borrow, for the occasion, the humble animal on which He rode! Surely, an ambitious coveting of the things the world calls great, ill becomes *His* followers, and is alike rebuked by the humiliation which attended the first, and the glory that will attend the second coming of the Son of God!

Keep your eye, therefore, steadfastly fixed, (as far as you can bear the blaze of light that bursts on you, in the contemplation,) on the glory reserved for you, as a fellow-heir with the Son of God, in the day of His appearing. Behold, with the eye of faith, the crown—the crown of righteousness—the crown of glory, which the Lord, the righteous Judge will give you in *that* day. Remember *that* crown was purchased for you with His own tears, and agony, and bloody sweat—and *then* say, if you can fear to entrust the measuring out of the portion of earthly goods, which is to fall to your share, into *His* hands?

II.—CONSOLATION.

We would now consider our subject as peculiarly calculated to supply patience and consolation amidst all the trials and afflictions, which are so often the peculiar portion of the children of God. For, so far are they from having any privileged exemption, in right of their covenant-relationship to God, from the ordinary sorrows and sufferings of humanity, that, in general, (strange as it may seem to those, who un-

derstand not the loving-kindness of the Lord,) they are visited with the chastenings of God's fatherly hand, beyond the visitation of all other men.

Now, whatever be the nature of those chastening visitations, the prospect of the day of Christ's appearing affords to a child of God abundant materials for the most appropriate, sustaining, and reviving comfort; which it imparts, principally, through the medium of two delightful trains of thought, suggested by the anticipation of that glorious day.

First, the recollection how rapidly the day is approaching, when to every faithful follower of the Lamb, sorrow and sighing shall for ever flee away—and everlasting joy and gladness rest upon their heads! Yes! mourning believer! the time of thy tribulation is but short—"The night is far spent—the day is at hand!"—the day to thee of unutterable triumph, unclouded brightness, unchangeable bliss!

When that day comes, (and seems not its dawn breaking on the world?) thy sorrows—those very sorrows, which now so lacerate and crush thy bleeding heart, will be remembered, if at all, only as the unquiet dreams of the night, to him who awaketh, in the morning, to the conscious possession and enjoyment of Heaven's choicest blessings! or as the storms of a tempestuous night to him, who, when morning dawns, reaches the haven where he would be—the home, where his heart's most precious treasures are laid up!

And does not the remembrance of those unquiet dreams serve only to enhance the sweetness of life's

waking bliss? Does not the retrospect of that night of storms endear, beyond expression, to the wearied mariner, the tranquillity of the sheltering haven—the enjoyments of the happy home?

Sweet, yet faint image, sorrowful child of God, what will be the result of thy retrospect of life's unquiet dreams and vexing storms, when thy slumbering body, wakening on the morning of the resurrection, in the likeness of thy Redeemer's, shall be reunited to thy glorified spirit, to enter on the full enjoyment of Heaven's eternal rest.

The second consolatory train of thought to which I have alluded, is the anticipation of the blessed results, which, in the day of Christ's second coming, His people will see to have flowed from their afflictions.

Then will it appear to themselves, and all their fellow-saints, what gracious purposes these afflictions were made to subserve, in that divine system of providential arrangements, by which their Heavenly Father carried on, with infinite wisdom and tenderness, His almighty work of sanctifying love. Then, child of God, will a rich harvest of glory be reaped by thy Redeemer, from that precious seed of sanctified sorrow, which was so often moistened with thy tears. Then will the trial of thy faith, purified in the furnace of affliction, and “much more precious than that of gold, purified in the fire, be found unto *praise*, and *honour*, and *glory*, at the appearing of Jesus Christ!”

Praise to thy God—whose strength was shewn to be perfect in thy weakness—whose grace was magni-

fied in the visible consolations, with which He made thy heart, amidst all its sorrows, triumphantly to rejoice—and whose faithfulness and loving-kindness were so conspicuously manifested, in all His dealings with thee, in affliction's dark and cloudy day.

Honour to thy fellow-saints—some of whom were perhaps first attracted and won over to Christ, and others strengthened, and confirmed, and comforted, so as to run their Christian race with increased alacrity and speed, by what they saw in thee of cheerful patience in the season of tribulation.

Glory to thyself—in the deepened traces of conformity to thy Saviour's image, in fuller measures of meetness for thy heavenly inheritance, and the abundant increase of “that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,” wrought out for thee, through the instrumentality of those afflictions, which will be then, indeed, felt to be unworthy to be compared with the glory in that day revealed.

Then, when thou seest what was the “need be” for thy trials, and how they have all issued in such praise to thy God, honour to His saints, and glory to thyself, *then* wilt thou exclaim, in a transport of holy thankfulness and joy—“Oh! now indeed I see, that it was good for me that I was afflicted! Oh! faithless heart, that did so indulge in rebellion, and repining at those trials, which were sent, as such a special token of my heavenly Father's love! Oh! faithful Saviour, that didst so patiently persevere, in Thy work of mercy, amidst all my provoking impatience and ingratitude; and wouldst not allow me to lose the

glory, which it was Thy gracious determination that I should reap from all my griefs. Everlasting praise to Thee, oh, Thou God of my salvation, for all my afflictions—I see, I feel and thankfully confess, not one could have been spared, not one withheld, without my having suffered an eternal loss !

And why not now, believer, grasp, by anticipation, some portion of this weight of eternal glory ? Why not now forget, for a while, thy sorrows, in the foretaste of this fulness of unending joy ? Why not now attempt, though it be with faint and faltering voice, the prelude to this song of everlasting praise ?

But in addition to this general view of the subject, if we examine it more minutely in detail, we will discover that there is no species of the vast variety of afflictions, to which we are exposed, for which the anticipation of the day of Christ's appearing does not supply peculiarly appropriate consolation.

Let us then proceed to a detailed proof of this declaration.

Art thou, Christian reader, one who hast seen some darling hope of earthly happiness, which for many years had been the cherished object of thy thoughts by day, and dreams by night—hast thou seen that hope blighted by the withering breath of disappointment, and shrouded with the gloom of the shadow of death ? And are there times with thee, when some trivial incident, some casual observation, unnoticed by any but thyself—the repetition, it may be, of some favourite passage or verse, or the return of some day or hour, or the revisiting of some scene or sport,

linked with the fondest memories of the past, strikes a string in thine heart, which in a moment vibrates with thrilling agony; and, at the touch, thoughts and feelings of acutest anguish which had been for a season lulled to rest, awake, as if refreshed by sleep, with renewed strength; and a tide of recollections rushes over thy spirit, fraught with the deepest, bitterest sorrow, which a child of God can be allowed to feel, and sweeping along with such overwhelming force, as seems, for a time, to threaten to carry away all thou art clinging to for support and consolation?

Sorrowing child of God, turn, I conjure thee, from the contemplation of earth's expiring hope, to the anticipation of that which shall never die! Remember, thou hast been called into existence by almighty power, and redeemed at an infinite cost, and loaded with unnumbered blessings, and entrusted with precious talents, and raised to exalted privileges, and entitled to expatiate through boundless prospects of promised glory and blessedness, as "an heir of God, and joint heir of Christ," for a nobler purpose, than to spend the allotted years of thine earthly pilgrimage in brooding over any blighted hopes of earthly enjoyment.

Rise, then, from the dust, Christian mourner—shake off the spirit of heaviness, and put on thy beautiful garments of praise—"Rise, the Master calleth thee!" calleth thee to glorify Him, by cheerful resignation, in the fires of affliction—calleth thee to seek thy future happiness in closer communion with Himself—in more entire devotedness to His service—in

going about, like Him, doing good, to the utmost extent that thine influence can reach,—callest thee to look away from the clouded prospects of earth, to the unclouded prospect of the day of His appearing; and to spend the short time of thy sojourning here, as in that day it will rejoice thee, in the retrospect, to have done.

What though the star of earthly hope, that shed its sweet soft radiance for a season o'er thy path, be set, to rise no more, shalt *thou*, who art privileged to walk in the light of God's countenance, even on earth, and hopest to bask in the full blaze of His glory throughout eternity—oh! shalt *thou* go mourning all thy days long, because, in His loving-kindness, the God of thy salvation has sent the angel of affliction to wean thee from a world, which He knew might ensnare, but could not satisfy, and thus to draw thee closer to His blessed self!

Instead, then, of looking *back*—(or, if so, only to call to remembrance the myriads of mercies, thou hast received at His hands)—look *forward*!

“Yet a little while—and He that cometh will come!” Oh! think of all the bliss—the glory that awaits thee, at His coming! think of *the price* He paid to purchase them for thee! and then say, should thy life be spent in brooding over *any* blighted hope?

2. Or does thy sorrow flow from a higher and a holier source? Is it such, as it is more suitable for a child of God to cherish? A sorrow with which we know that “blessed are they that mourn”—for truth itself has declared, that *they shall* be comforted!

Is thine a godly sorrow on account of sin? Have thine eyes been opened, by the Holy Spirit, to see the hideousness of sin, more especially from the diabolical expression of hatred against God which its features wear; and, above all, from having contemplated its frightful image, as reflected in the glass of the sufferings of His well-beloved Son?

And dost thou shudder to think, how long this accursed thing was the cherished inmate of thy bosom; and how all thy solicitude, for years, was to pamper *its* desires, and provide for *its* gratification?

And is thy soul exceeding sorrowful to find, that though no longer harboured as a welcome guest, within thine heart, this visitant from hell is still no stranger there; but clings to thee with fearful tenacity, intruding its hateful presence into the inner sanctuary of thy spirit; sullyng, with its unhallowed visions, the secret chambers of imagery; and, by its defiling touch, polluting thy purest pleasures, poisoning thy sweetest enjoyments, and mingling with and marring all the melody of thine heart, in the solitary musings of devout meditation, or the sublime exercises of prayer and praise?

Is such your sorrow, mourning child of God? Then look up, and lift up your head, for your redemption draweth nigh! "Behold, I bring *you* glad tidings of great joy!" The hour of your complete and everlasting deliverance is at hand! Yet a little—and thy warfare shall be accomplished! and shall issue, the moment that death emancipates thy spirit

from its conflict with corruption, in perfect and everlasting victory over sin, in every shape !

And when the Captain of thy salvation shall appear, *then* shall thy triumph be indeed complete ! for He will give thee, in that day of His appearing, the crown for which thou hast so long panted, and toiled, and struggled—in *His* strength successfully—a crown of *righteousness* ! Then shall the utmost longings, the loftiest ambition of thy soul be satisfied—for thou shalt be presented and pronounced “ faultless, unblameable in holiness, before the presence of the holy God, with exceeding joy !”

But while you look forward to the triumphs of that day, to sustain and comfort your spirit, amidst the wearying and agonizing struggles of the arduous warfare, in which you are engaged, let the prospect equally stimulate you to increased vigilance and energy, in carrying on the conflict ; so that each day may witness some fresh victory over sin and Satan—some further steps of progress towards the glorious goal of your wishes—the prize of your high calling in Christ Jesus—even the attainment of a purity of heart, as unsullied by sin, as your Redeemer’s—a perfection of holiness, modelled, in every feature, after the likeness of the holy God !

3. Or do you groan, believer, beneath the pressure of a body of infirmity and pain, on which disease has fastened its envenomed fangs, and which death seems to have marked for its destined prey ? And is your spirit (which cannot but sympathize with the companion to which it is so closely united,)—conti-

nually weighed down by the body's weakness, or agonized by its sufferings, or excited by its restlessness, or enfeebled by its debility, so that you cannot discern even spiritual things with the clearness, or grasp them with the vigour, which you were privileged to do in healthier, and so far happier, days?

Is the living soul within thee so harassed, and retarded in running its heavenward race, by the dying body to which it is linked, that thou seemest to thyself to be undergoing a species of suffering, like that endured of old by him who was condemned to drag about with him, fastened to his own body, a corpse, that was mouldering to decay; so that thou art often constrained, in an agony of feeling, to cry out—"Oh! wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?"

Oh! surely when you reflect, how swiftly the day is approaching, when that very body, which is now such a hindrance to all your heavenward movements, hanging like a dead weight on all your efforts to soar upwards, or engage, with energy, in the Saviour's service, that very body shall be made a glorified participator with your glorified spirit, in all the sublime exercises and enjoyments of the celestial sanctuary—when you reflect, that sooner, perhaps, than a careless world dreams of, or even His own church anticipates, He that is coming will come, and you shall know what it is, through the instrumentality of a body, made like unto your Redeemer's glorious body,

“As with a Seraph's voice to sing—
To fly as on a Cherub's wing—
Performing with unwearied hands,
A present Saviour's high commands!”

Oh! surely, child of God, when *this* prospect bursts on your view, you may be well content to run with *patience* the race set before you, even though you should be obliged to drag after you, for a few short years, a body of infirmity, decay, and death—which contains the hidden seeds of *such* a body of undecaying strength, immortality, and glory.

4. But perhaps your appointed trial is of a different cast. You have been yourself, it may be, called out of the darkness of your natural state, into the marvellous light of gospel-truth, and gospel-privileges ;—while still that darkness overshadows the family, of which you are a member, and the friends, whom your heart has for years most fondly loved. And now, you no longer experience from them that endearing sympathy in all your joys and sorrows, which you once enjoyed—and in those higher hopes and pleasures, whose divine attractions have been unveiled to your view, they see no form nor comeliness, that they should desire them ; so that now the bond of union between you and them seems broken, and you feel that you are regarded as a stranger in your own home—one, with whom its more than ever beloved inmates feel no congenial sympathy of taste, and hold no affectionate communion of heart, as once they delighted to do—yea! perhaps proceed further than this chilling estrangement of affection and confidence—proceed to angrier exhibitions of that enmity, which must ever be excited, in the breasts of the unconverted, by the manifested presence, and faithful testimony, of “the truth as it is in Jesus”—proceed

perhaps to all the wounding and irritating expressions of undisguised displeasure and disgust—ridicule you as an enthusiast, or reproach you as a hypocrite—persecute you as a fanatic, or pity you as a fool. Oh! if such be your trial, look forward to the day of Christ's appearing—and be comforted! Remember that in *that* day the Son of God Himself will espouse your cause, openly, in the face of the assembled universe! and proclaim that He always regarded it, and will then publicly avenge it as His own. Then will all the reproaches you have borne for His sake be rolled away, like the stone from the sepulchre, where the Lord of glory lay; and your character shall come forth, shining in resplendent lustre—your righteousness as clear as the noon-day! and the purity of your motives, as a lamp that burneth!

Then will your persecutors see that all their taunts and threatenings have been made, by the overruling hand of your God, only so many stepping-stones, by which you have risen higher in the scale of glory!

Then will the wisdom of your choice, in having preferred the reproach of Christ to all the pleasures of sin, or applause of the world, be abundantly vindicated—when the voice of Him who sitteth upon the throne, shall ratify the wisdom of that choice, by saying to you—"Come, ye blessed of my Father! inherit the kingdom, prepared for you, from the foundation of the world!"

But while the prospect of this coming day supplies you with abundant comfort, on your own account,

let it equally stimulate you to unwearied labours of love, on behalf of those, who, by their enmity to you, prove themselves to be the enemies of Christ—Oh! remember the loving Saviour's injunction—"to bless them that curse you, and pray for them, which despitefully use you, and persecute you!"

Cease not, by earnest intercession for them, and affectionate expostulation with them, in all the meekness, wisdom and faithfulness of Christian love; and above all, by a consistent exhibition of the power of Christian principles, and the attractiveness of the Christian character, to do all that in you lieth to win them over to Christ; that in the day of the manifestation of the Son of Man, you may see them standing beside you at His right hand, and participating with you, in that day, and through eternity, in all the triumphs, blessedness, and glory, which shall be the portion of His people, for ever and ever.

5. But perhaps your sorrow is of a less selfish character! It may be your rare and most blessed privilege, to belong to a family, all whose beloved members are members of the household of faith—and all the friends you love most fondly are friends of Christ—so that your deepest solitudes, your dearest desires on their behalf, are sweetly set at rest and satisfied, because, from your own experience of the Saviour's preciousness, you know, that having Him, they have all things, worth your wishing for them. Still your heart is forced to bleed, on their account, from the sight or knowledge of their intense sufferings, either from severe bodily disease, or acute men-

tal anguish, arising from some of those innumerable sources of sorrow, of which our world, that great reservoir of affliction, is so full !

If this be so, I will not bid you to weep no more—for the highest of all authorities commands you to “weep with those that weep !”—And the highest of all examples encourages *such* sympathizing tears—for when He saw the Jews weeping, and the sisters of Lazarus weeping, beside their brother’s tomb—“Jesus wept !”

But I will bid you wipe your tears for the present, and look away, for a while, from the sorrows now felt by those you love, to the joys of which you shall see them in possession, in the day of Christ’s appearing—when you shall behold them, among the crowd of rejoicing saints, surrounding the Saviour, in that glorious day ! All their tears wiped away by God’s own hand ! Not a trace of sorrow lingering about them—but every expression of their countenance, every tone of their voice, telling you that they are *as* happy as Jesus can make them ! *therefore* as happy as even your heart—deeply as it loves them, and desires their happiness—can wish them to be !

Oh ! what a glorious transformation will you behold in them, as well as experience in yourself, on that day of restitution to the redeemed, of all that sin had marred, or taken away !

Those brows on which you now so often see the cloud of sadness resting, you shall *then* see beaming with the brightness of a crown of glory—That cheek, now so pale with wasting disease, or nights of sleep-

leanness, shall *then* be glowing with the radiant smile of conscious immortality! Those eyes now so often dimmed with tears, shall *then* be sparkling with more than seraph joy! Those hands, now hanging down in helpless feebleness, or lifted up in agonizing supplication for supporting strength, shall then be sweeping, with rapturous exultation, one of the golden harps of heaven! That voice, now so faint with weakness, or tremulous with anguish, shall then be heard by you shouting the conqueror's song of triumph, or joining with you, and all the hosts of the redeemed, in the chorus of adoring praise to "the Lamb that was slain!" In a word, that heart, which is now as full of sorrow, as a child of God's can ever be, shall be then filled with all the fulness of joy—a joy altogether unspeakable, and full of glory!

6. But it may be that your grief is, in one sense, of a yet deeper shade—your sorrow, on account of the objects of your fondest affections, may be like that of the bereaved mourner of old, "refusing to be comforted, *because they are not!*"

Death, that cruel severer of the dearest earthly ties, has torn them from your embrace! The grave has closed over their beloved forms; and thus hidden from your eyes, for the for ever of time, what gave to this wilderness world all its charm!

When they travelled by your side, their gladdening smile and fond companionship made the dreariest spots in the desert look bright, and the rough places smooth! But now they are gone—their smile has passed away from earth, for ever—you must travel

the remainder of your journey, in loneliness of heart—a dark and heavy cloud rests on all the scenes of earthly enjoyment—a cloud, which shall never pass away ! If this be so, I will not bid you *not* to sorrow. The Apostle of the Gentiles who said to his weeping friends, while parting from them, as he feared, for ever, upon earth, “What mean ye to weep, and to *break mine heart* ?” He knew the human heart too well, to desire his beloved Thessalonian converts not to sorrow for the friends in Christ they had loved and lost ; but I will desire you, as he did them, “*not* to sorrow, *as* others who have no hope !”

I would remind you, as he reminded the Thessalonian mourners, “that if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with Him.”

Yes ! Christian mourner, I would bid you look forward, when such sorrow overwhelms you, to the day of Christ’s appearing, and your sorrow shall be turned into joy. I doubt not that in the intermediate state, the emancipated spirits of those, who in life loved in Christ, will know each other—will meet, with the most blissful recognition, and rejoice together in the anticipation of this glorious day ; but it is when the day itself arrives, that you shall see those, for whom you mourn, as radiantly encircled with glory—as triumphantly exulting with happiness, as you can desire—*never again* to lose sight of them—*never again* to be parted from them, but to enjoy everlasting communion with them, in the presence of the Lord.

Habituate your mind, then, to dwell on the delightful contrast between the happiest intercourse you ever enjoyed with those, from whom death has separated you for a season, with what you will enjoy with them, when, in your Father's house in heaven, you are reunited for ever !

Here, your sympathy was constantly called into the most painful exercise—to share in sorrows, which you vainly strove to soothe ; and participate in trials, you could neither alleviate nor remove.

There, your sympathy will be only and everlastingly called forth into the most gladdening exercise—to share with those beloved ones in their fulness of joy ; and participate in their satisfying pleasures for evermore.

Here, your heart was often pained to see in them inconsistencies of character, which disfigured the Redeemer's image—or improprieties of conduct, which dishonored the Redeemer's name !

There, your heart will eternally rejoice, to see their perfectly-purified spirits, like a polished mirror, whose surface is unsullied by a speck or stain, reflecting the Redeemer's image, without a single feature being, in the smallest degree, distorted or dimmed by sin ; while every word and action will be undividedly devoted to the Redeemer's glory.

Here your affection for them was continually a snare, drawing you by imperceptible attraction, towards the brink of that sin, so peculiarly provoking to a jealous God—idolatrous creature-love.

There, in the immediate presence of a Saviour-

God, beholding Him face to face, you will experience a sweet impossibility of loving any created object, in the remotest approach to rivalry with Him. Yea, the very sweetest feature of your glorified love for the objects of your affection will be, that it will prove a powerful means of deepening your supreme love to that Saviour-God, who will be to you, and all you love in Him, the bond of your union, and the crown of your happiness for ever.

For ever! oh, what a contrast those two words supply to your sweet but short-lived intercourse on earth! For ever! yes! for ever! Ages and ages will roll on, but you will be still with those you love. And ages more will pass away; but still their smile will beam on you; and still their voice will gladden you; and thus will it be for ever, and ever, and ever.

Contrast also the scenes amidst which your affection for those you have loved and lost, first commenced, with those amidst which it shall be renewed, and perpetuated for ever! Oh! what a glorious contrast between its birth-place, and its eternal home!

Its birth-place, a world where every object bears the stamp of apostacy and alienation from God—where Satan reigns with such fearful supremacy, that he is styled in Scripture, “the god of this world”—where sin and sorrow hold their united empire—where we feel their baneful influences within ourselves, see them in those we love best, and witness them wherever we turn our eyes around—where we

are constantly brought in collision with those, who despise the Saviour that we have learned to love—and where our sweetest occupations in His service, shared with those whom we love in Him, only give us a deeper insight into, and bring us into closer contact with, the frightful mass of guilt and misery, with which our rebellious and ruined world abounds.

Such has been the nursery of our Christian affections! What will be their home? A world where Satan, sin, or sorrow, shall never, never come!—where every object bears the stamp of loyalty and love to God—where not even a passing sight or sound of suffering shall ever dash, with a single drop of bitterness, the cup of blissful communion with those we love—where all our companions shall glow with such gratitude to the Saviour, as burns within our own breast—and all our services, shared with the glorified spirits, whom, from the endeared recollections of earth, we shall love, even in heaven, with a peculiar tenderness of holy love, shall bring us in contact only with scenes of unmingled joy!

What the precise nature of those services will be, Scripture has not revealed. We cannot, therefore, speak with any confidence, where the word of God is silent. We must wait, till the hand of God lifts up the veil, which He has Himself flung over the future employments of glorified saints throughout eternity.

That services, suitable to their exalted capacities, and purified natures, will be supplied, we may confidently conclude, both from the constitution of the

soul—which must be actively employed, in order to be satisfyingly happy—and from the express assurance of Scripture, that, when the saints of God shall inhabit the New Jerusalem, “they shall serve Him, day and night, in His temple, and rest not, day or night, singing praises unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever !” While at the same time, we do not doubt that these expressions rather intimate to us the *fact*, that glorified spirits shall be ceaselessly employed in serving and praising the God of their salvation, than reveal to us the *precise character* of the services or praises, in which they shall be employed—denote rather their constant habitude of devout adoration, joyful praise, and untiring energy, zeal, and devotedness to the glory of God, than the specific nature of their celestial and eternal occupations.

Yet, Christian reader, by glancing back at some of the happiest hours of hallowed communion, you once enjoyed with those who are now with Christ, you may catch a *faint* glimpse of *what* is reserved for your eternal communion with them, in the immediate presence of the Lord.

If you have found it so unutterably delightful to converse together of the Saviour whom you love, oh, what will it be to converse together *with* the Saviour, face to face ! Did your hearts burn within you, with such glowing fervor of holy joy, when He spake to you by His Spirit, and opened to you the Scriptures concerning himself ? Oh, then with what transports will they burn, when you shall together drink in the

endearing accents of His own blessed voice. If your earthly Sabbath love was so sweet, what will be Heaven's eternal Sabbath love? When you caught a passing glimpse of His countenance, smiling on you, though but seen through the glass of faith darkly, did it not make earth seem to you as the very gate of Heaven! Then what will you feel, when in the midst of all Heaven's sights and sounds of blessedness, you shall be permitted to gaze together on the glory of His countenance, unveiled in all its brightness—beaming on you the ineffable sweetness of His smile of love to His redeemed!

Oh, *faintly indeed* can your happiest hours of Christian communion with those you have loved on earth, enable you to conceive, what will be the blissful communion, which you shall enjoy with them, when you shall together see the Saviour, as He is, in all His glory—shall together expatiate amidst all the wonders of creation, following the Lamb, whithersoever He goeth—shall trace together, in His presence, the mysteries of His providential government, and the deeper mysteries of His redeeming love—survey together the history of your earthly pilgrimage, and behold the secret of all His dealings with you, sweetly explained; and His loving-kindness in them all—even the most afflictive, fully unfolded to your view!—shall be attracted together, nearer and nearer, as eternal ages are rolling on, to the uncreated source of all perfection, and all blessedness—shall participate together, with angels and archangels, and the general assembly and church of the first-

born, in the sublime songs and services of the temple, not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens—shall be employed together on errands of your Redeemer's love—shall cast your crowns together in thankful adoration, at His feet, and unite your voices together in the everlasting anthem of praise before His throne !

Christian mourner for those who have fallen asleep in Jesus, do you, in very truth, believe that this prospect shall, ere long, be realized for eternity ? And can you, with this prospect before your view, be now swallowed up with overmuch sorrow ? Can you even *seem* to say, that you have nothing left worth living for, when you can live for the glory of Him, who, with His own blood, has purchased for you, and the best beloved of your soul, an eternity of *such* a communion of endearing love, and overflowing bliss ?

CHAPTER IX.

ADDRESS TO MILLENNARIANS.

I HAVE thus considered the second coming of the Lord, in connection with some of its most important practical results ; and, I trust, shewn that it supplies a most searching test, to try the validity of our claims to the character of a Christian—a most desirable standard for the regulation of a believer's affections towards the Saviour—a most valuable directory for his conduct, in every situation in which he can be placed—and most abundant and persuasive motives for contentment, patience, and resignation, under all the trials by which he can be visited, in God's chastening love !

I have also, I trust, shewn that it answers all these important purposes, *independently* of any *peculiar* views, on the subject of unfulfilled prophecy, with regard, I mean, to those subordinate features of the prophetical scheme, over which such a veil of obscurity, as to their *precise import*, must be admitted to rest, and in the interpretation of which, therefore, there is so much reason to expect difference of

opinion, and so much room to exercise charity of feeling, among the children of God!

Convinced as I am, and, (I hope it will appear, from the unprejudiced examination of the passages of the word of God, adduced in support of that conviction,) convinced by the force of scriptural testimony on the subject, that the second coming of the Son of God is pre-eminently the believer's "blessed hope," on which the eye and heart of the Christian should be habitually fixed, I have thought it to be an object of paramount importance, to prove that this glorious event is calculated to exert all its purifying, elevating, supporting, and comforting influences, with perhaps equal efficacy, over all the children of God, whatever may be the diversities of their judgment, as to those points connected with the Millennarian scheme, which so much divide the church of Christ in our day.

However, then, real Christians may differ, in the interpretation of the controverted points of the Millennarian hypothesis, let them all agree to fix their thoughts and desires on the second coming of their Redeemer, as the event which will usher in the consummation of all their most glorious prospects of future and eternal blessedness; and to derive from its anticipated approach, the most animating motives for maintaining that spirit of constant watchfulness, patience, faithfulness, and zeal, in the service of the Lord, which the combined consideration, how certainly it *will*, how soon it *may* take place, is so powerfully fitted to produce and to promote.

Let it ever be remembered, that towards the pro-

duction and promotion of *this* spirit, (and it is primarily for this purpose, as we have seen, it is so frequently brought forward in Scripture,) all that is *indispensably* required, is what all real Christians are agreed upon—namely, that the Son of God *will* assuredly come again to visit our world, not as He came at first, in great humiliation, but in power and great glory—that He *may* thus come very soon, (for no sober-minded anti-millennarian can feel so *confident* in his views of unfulfilled prophecy, as to deny the *possibility* of this,) and that the purpose, for which He will come, is one unspeakably desirable and delightful to His friends, but equally dreadful and appalling to His enemies.

What essential service would be rendered to the cause of vital Christianity, in our day, if all the faithful followers of the Saviour could be persuaded to unite in concentrating their energies, and talents, in the enforcement of those grand views of our Lord's second coming, about which all real Christians are of one mind—(with reference more especially to their legitimate practical results)—and then discuss, with the sober moderation, and affectionate temper of Christian wisdom, humility, and love, all those disputable parts of the system of unfulfilled prophecy, about which Christians will, most probably, continue to differ, till the fulfilment of the events makes what was doubtful and obscure, become certain and clear.

One cannot, however, observe, without deep regret, how different is the actual state of the case.

The study of unfulfilled prophecy, which might, if properly pursued, be rendered so profitable in quickening the believer's faith, brightening his hope, and advancing his sanctification, seems, if we may judge by the exhibition of what is passing before our eyes, to possess, either from its own nature, or the influence of Satanic agency, or the combined operation of both, a peculiar tendency to produce injurious results in those who embark, with excessive ardour and zeal, in its investigation. It appears to have a strange and deplorable power of fascination, whereby it often engrosses too monopolizing a devotedness of time, and thought, and talents, to the serious injury of the spiritual welfare both of its enthusiastic votaries, and of the church of Christ; and too often it has proved a means of dividing those, who ought to be knit together, as common members of one mystical body, in the unity of the spirit, and the bond of peace. I would therefore now proceed to address, in the language of affectionate expostulation, those who, while agreeing in all the vital and essential views of divine truth—all which can fundamentally affect the glory of the Saviour's character, or the grounds of a sinner's hopes, are yet permitted by that Spirit, who has taught them to agree in these points, to differ upon others, which, though far indeed from being intrinsically uninteresting or unimportant, are not yet revealed with sufficient clearness, to compel the consent of all the children of God in any one system of interpretation. And, therefore, a difference of opinion, touching such points, after a patient, unpre-

judiced, and prayerful examination of the testimony of the word of God, ought not assuredly for one moment to interrupt the flow of Christian love, or the harmony of Christian communion, among the members of *that* family, of which God is the common Father, Jesus the common Saviour, and the Holy Spirit the common Comforter and Guide!

I would first address myself to those, usually designated Millennarians—though the term is not a correctly distinguishing one, as almost all Christians expect a millennium—a thousand years of peculiar holiness and happiness on earth, through the diffusion and reign of the gospel, in its full glory.

To prevent, however, mistake as to whom especially I mean by this title, I would observe, that I do *not* mean those who have imbibed any unscriptural opinions, on any essential doctrine of the gospel—I do *not* mean those, who have denied, or in any measure explained away, the vicarious nature, and all-sufficient efficacy of the Saviour's sacrifice—or the imputation of His justifying righteousness—or the perfect sinlessness of His human nature. Nor do I mean those, who profess to have discovered, in our scriptural church, the Babylon denounced in the Apocalypse;* or in the noise of voices, uttering unin-

* One cannot forbear expressing the deepest surprise and sorrow, that *such* a charge should be brought at *such* a time, against our venerable and apostolical church; a church, which has numbered, and still numbers, among her members, so many of God's dearest and holiest children; and among her ministers, so many of His most faithful and honoured servants; a church, which bears emblazoned on her portals the Saviour's command—

telligible sounds, the revival of the Pentecostal gift of tongues, whereby the assembled Jews were enabled to hear and *understand*, each in his own tongue, wherein he was born—the wonderful works of God.

No—I mean simply those, who, believing the views of divine truth, embodied in the articles and liturgy of our apostolical church, expect that the Redeemer's reign on earth, during the promised Millennium, will

“Search the Scriptures;” which echoes in her articles the Apostle's exclamation—“God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ!” embodies in her services the spirit of genuine Christianity; and breathes in her liturgy the very soul of scriptural devotion!

It is certainly a proof of singular ingenuity, not to say invention, to discover in *such* a church the antitype of the Apocalyptic Babylon!

Nor is the time for preferring the charge, less strange or unwarrantable than the charge itself; a time, when this church had awakened to a full sense of her high dignity, and awful responsibility; and was putting forth all her energies and resources, with pre-eminent faithfulness and zeal; a time, when she was beginning to correct whatever errors or abuses, (inseparable from every human institution,) the lapse of years might have introduced, and to adopt whatever improvements the circumstances of the age might demand; a time, when God had raised up, in her communion, an unprecedented number of faithful, holy, and devoted labourers, and was putting signal honour on the exertions of her ministers at home, and her missionaries abroad; and, above all—a time, when dealing with her, as with a beloved child, a faithful God was chastening her, with His merciful correction, to make her truly great, in spiritual greatness; was drawing her more closely to Himself, to lean on His arm *alone* for safety, strength, and consolation, as finding that vain was the help of man; and was purifying her in the furnace of affliction, to purge away the dross she had contracted, by too close a contact with the world, and thus to fit her for reflecting more clearly the image of divine truth, and shining more resplendently with the light of divine glory!

be a personal reign, during which He shall appear in visible manifestation, in glorified, as he once did in suffering, humanity—that all His faithful people, or at least, all his faithful martyrs, who had previously fallen asleep shall rise, and reign with Him, on a renovated earth—that the Jews will bear some distinguished part in this millennial dispensation, restored to their own land, and raised to more than their original glory—and that, judging from the signs of the times, the period of the Redeemer's advent, to establish this Millennial kingdom, cannot now be far distant.

In addressing myself to you, beloved in our common Lord, who hold, in the sense I have stated, or one nearly similar, the millennarian scheme, I would wish to make one or two prefatory observations, to convince you, that any language of faithful admonition, which I may adopt, is not addressed to you by a prejudiced opponent of your views.

First, then, as to the expectation, that the Redeemer's reign, during the Millennial period, will be a personal reign.

Now here I would readily admit, that this is, in many points of view, a most pleasing expectation, and seemingly supported by many passages of Scripture, which, taken in their literal sense, fully warrant the hope you so delight to cherish.

It must, I think, be conceded on all sides, that were we desired to form an a priori anticipation as to the probability of such an event, we could discover many strong and satisfactory grounds for indulging

the belief, that, as our earth was the theatre of our Redeemer's humiliation, it shall also be the theatre of His triumph—that as it witnessed His sufferings, when He trod its surface as a Man of sorrows, so it shall also witness His exaltation, when He shall reign over it, as the supreme king of the whole earth—as it was darkened by the shadow of His cross, so shall it be lightened with the glory of His throne.

There does appear, we would most willingly acknowledge, a great antecedent probability, that a spot which has been invested with such amazing importance and interest, as the selected field of conflict between the principalities of light and darkness—the arena, on which the battle of man's redemption was fought, and the victory of the King of Heaven over the prince of hell achieved, should yet be destined for some more magnificent display of the divine glory—a second and sublimer manifestation of incarnate Deity. We cannot, therefore, wonder that so many commentators on prophecy should be induced to interpret literally all those passages, which seem to warrant so reasonable an expectation—to ratify so delightful a hope.

You should, however, at the same time, remember that there is so much in the actual phenomena of the creation, whether natural or moral—so much in the scheme of redemption, viewed as to its final results—and so much in the present arrangements and future developments of the divine government, contrary to what our a priori speculations would have led us to anticipate, that we must confess ourselves to be

(when left to our own reasonings,) very inadequate judges of what is suitable for the display of the divine glory. And, therefore, further than revelation has enabled us to speak with confidence, we should be extremely cautious of resting much weight on any suitableness we may imagine we can trace, in any particular event or system, for the exhibition of the glory of God.

The force, accordingly, of any a priori speculation, on this subject, is materially weakened by this undeniable incompetency of ours, to pronounce safely any authoritative judgment, not clearly warranted by the *incontrovertible* testimony of the written word. You are aware also that the passages, which to you appear so conclusive in establishment of your views of a personal reign, seem, to many of God's children, to be not merely capable of, but to require from the context, a spiritual interpretation—and their view appears to derive great weight from the universally admitted fact, that the *essential* glory of the Redeemer's reign must be spiritual, even its being a reign of "righteousness, and peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost," and also from the Redeemer's own express declaration—"My kingdom is not of this world." Surely, then, when you calmly weigh these considerations, it ought not to excite your surprise or your displeasure, that the force, either of what to you appears so reasonable an expectation, or such strong scriptural testimonies, should not equally strike other children of God as conclusive evidence, and that, therefore, with equal zeal for the Redeemer's

glory, and equal willingness to bow to the decisions of the written word, they are constrained to come, on this point, to a conclusion so different from yours.

The spirit of these observations will equally apply to much of the peculiar aspect, in which you regard the ancient people of God; and the *peculiar glory* which you believe to be reserved for them.

A habit of viewing Scriptural privileges and promises, exclusively in a spiritual light, may indispose the mind even of a child of God, for receiving the opinion, that, when once united in Christ, there will be any difference, as to priority of privileges, or superiority of blessings, in any sense of the word, deserving of the name, between Jews and Gentiles. It may seem to them that the privilege of being *in Christ*—a member of His body—a participator of His spirit—a joint-heir of His glory—so concentrates all of substantial honour and happiness, which is worthy of a believer's desires, that no superiority of privilege, beyond this, can be the portion of any created being—whether gentile or Jew.

I say not how far this is the right view*—but I do

* This view as to the equality of the ultimate and eternal glory of Jews and Gentiles, as joint-heirs with Christ in the heavenly state, is quite compatible with the admission of peculiar privileges being bestowed upon the Jews, during the millennial dispensation. It is unequivocally declared, by St. Paul, (Romans xi.) that they are destined to bear a peculiarly distinguished part, in bringing about the full blessedness and glory of that dispensation. What can be more expressly declaratory of the preeminent station that will be assigned to God's ancient

say it is a view, which I *can* well conceive a child of God might take; and for holding which I *cannot* conceive, how any other child of God (even though constrained to differ from him,) should love him, as a brother in Christ, with one particle less of fond and fervent Christian love.

Again, as to the hope to which Millennarians cling

people, in ushering in the glory of the Church of Christ, in the latter days, than those verses—"Now, if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness—for if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" Is it not here clearly asserted, that the full glory of the Christian church, as gathered from amongst the Gentiles, will be preceded, and perhaps mainly accomplished, by the restoration of the Jews to the privileges of God's beloved people, and their ingathering into the fold of Christ; thus becoming, by their conversion, such striking witnesses to the truth of Christianity, and, perhaps, as Christian missionaries, the chief heralds and instruments of salvation to the heathen world!

Should not this consideration, joined to the reflection, that for whatever of spiritual peace, or joy, or consolation, we have ever experienced, through the channel of the Scriptures, we are indebted to the Jews, (for patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, all were Jews;) and, above all, to the affecting thought, that for whatever hope of eternal salvation we possess, we are indebted exclusively to a Jew, (for, in His human nature, Jesus was Himself a Jew!) oh! should not all this kindle in our hearts feelings of the deepest, tenderest, most grateful compassion and interest towards a people, to whom we owe a debt of such infinite obligation, and with whom are so inseparably linked the glorious destinies of the Church of Christ! And should we not be prompted to manifest, more than we have yet done, a peculiar degree of solicitude, by our prayers, our influence, our contributions, and every means within our reach, to advance the efficiency and triumphant progress of that preeminently interesting and important institution, the Society for promoting Christianity among the Jews.

with so tenacious a grasp of eager—I had almost said—excessive affection, that in the predicted conflagration for which it is reserved, this earth will not be itself consumed, but only whatever of defilement it has contracted from the polluting influence of sin, so that our world will come forth, out of that purifying furnace, a glorified world, (so to speak,) meet to be the residence of the pure and glorified inhabitants, who shall dwell therein, during the Millennial dispensation—This is also, it must be confessed, in many points of view, a very delightful expectation, that can apparently plead, in its favor, a multitude of passages in the word of God.

Nor can I conceive any possible objection or dislike, which any christian mind can entertain to the expectation, that this earth shall yet be restored to all the beauty and blessedness of its primeval condition; and that a part of the Redeemer's triumph over Satan shall consist in repealing the curse, which that malignant spirit brought on this beautiful specimen of divine workmanship—and reinstating it, during the millennial reign, in the high and honourable post assigned to it, on the morning of its creation, as a witness to proclaim the praises, and a mirror to reflect the attributes, of its God.

And surely it must endear this earth to our affections, to glance back, retrospectively, to the period, when first it emerged out of chaos, a beautiful creation—with the stamp of the divine hand fresh on every feature—all radiant with celestial loveliness—and resplendent with celestial light! When to greet

the new-born stranger, and welcome its appearance in the universe, with a hymn of high gratulation, "the morning stars sang together—and all the sons of God shouted for joy"—when even a yet higher testimony was borne to its value, and the contemplation of its beauty yielded delight to more than created intelligences—for God Himself looked on it out of heaven with fond complacency, and behold, even in *His sight*, it was very good.

And though sin has indeed sadly marred and sullied its fairest features, yet has it "so much of its youthful beauty left"—that even on its sin-polluted surface, there are spots of such surpassing loveliness, reflecting the Creator's attributes so clearly, and testifying so loudly to His praise, that, while gazing on them, we cannot but feel—"Surely, *these* need not be swept away—surely *such* a world need not be annihilated, in order that man may enjoy the highest happiness of which he is capable, (till admitted into heaven,) in the smile and service of his God."

Let but the whole world be even as beautiful as this spot—let but sin, with all its accursed train of evils, be utterly exterminated from the face of the earth—let but the love of God reign in every heart, and the image of God be stamped on every soul, of all its inhabitants—let but the communication between earth and heaven be once more opened—and man walk with a present and visible Saviour-God, in holy and happy communion, even as one walketh with a friend—and angels once again pass to and fro between heaven and earth, on errands of love from God, and

visits of love to man—and could we not then contemplate our world, thus restored to its paradisaical beauty, with cordial delight, as every way worthy of being the Millennial habitation of the saints of God!

While, however, it is confessed to be delightful to contemplate the whole animate, and even the inanimate creation, rejoicingly participating in the glorious results of the Redeemer's triumph over Satan, it should be as willingly remembered, and admitted, that individuals of equal piety with those who cherish such expectations—of equally exalted views, connected with the glorious issue of the Redeemer's mediatorial undertaking, and equal reverence for the authoritative decisions of the word of God, may regard and interpret those prophetic announcements, (in which some discover a promise, that on this earth there shall yet be paradise restored,) exclusively in a spiritual sense—may see in the verses, which declare that “the wilderness shall rejoice and blossom as the rose,” only promises of universal spiritual beauty and fruitfulness, turning the moral wilderness of our world into a well-cultured garden of the Lord—and in such expressions as “the wolf shall lie down with the lamb,” only promises of universal harmony and peace, reigning in every human heart, as the result of the wide-spread influence of the gospel, mitigating the ferocity of every angry passion, and breathing into every soul of man its own blessed spirit of meekness, gentleness, and love.

This may to them seem beautifully shadowed forth, according to the peculiar style of oriental writers, in

those expressive images, derived from the objects of external nature, employed to illustrate moral or spiritual phenomena, with a peculiar felicity and force, and for this purpose arrayed in all the rich and glowing tints of the poetry of the east.

To them it may appear, that no other transfiguration awaits our world, than that which its regenerated inhabitants, brought under the full influence of the principles and spirit of the gospel, and thus transfigured by a complete conformity to the Saviour's character, shall undergo—but that the earth itself, originally cursed for man's transgression, and since that, lying under the sentence of a far heavier curse, as the theatre of the most appalling crime that *could* be committed on its surface—the crucifixion of its Creator—is reserved, in God's righteous judgment, for utter destruction—and shall be consumed, in the fire of the last day, in total annihilation. Nor can *they* deem its renovation, and recovery from the ruin which Satan has been instrumental in bringing on it, *more essential* to the completeness of the Saviour's triumph over the originator of evil in the universe, than the recovery of myriads of immortal beings from the eternal ruin, in which the accursed seducer of souls has involved such countless multitudes—created in the image, and made partakers of the immortality of God!

Beyond all controversy, a single atom of the material universe cannot be more precious than countless myriads of immortal beings, in the sight of that God, who is love! So that if Satan can be permitted, for

mysterious purposes, to triumph with malignant satisfaction, in seeing myriads of spirits, eternally tormented, through his diabolical influence, “in the fire that shall not be quenched,” he may assuredly be permitted the far inferior gratification of seeing an atom of matter, through his influence, reduced to ashes, in the flames of the final conflagration.

So little are we competent to decide on the destiny of our earth, from speculative opinions, grounded on any reasonings of our own, independently of the *express* testimony of revelation—and so much ground is there for real Christians to agree to differ, in a friendly spirit, touching a matter of such doubtful intimation, and subordinate importance !

Again, we would willingly admit, as to the expectation that our Lord’s second advent will precede and introduce, not follow and close, the Millennial dispensation—that many powerful arguments may be adduced, which seem to warrant this opinion ; and especially it must, I think, be conceded, by every candid mind, that *if* our Lord’s exhortations to continued watchfulness, grounded on the uncertainty of the day or hour of His coming again, refer to the period of His promised personal appearance, in the clouds of heaven, when He shall come, in glorious and awful manifestation, to be glorified in His saints—and avenged upon His enemies—then does it seem to be impossible to reconcile *such* exhortations, grounded on *such* a basis, with the supposition of the post-millennial advent of our Lord ?

If, prior to His second coming, a thousand years of

universal righteousness, and peace were to be seen on earth, how could any Christian, previous to the commencement of this era, be consistently called upon to watch, as not knowing the day or hour when the Lord might come, since, on *this* supposition, he must know that, before that event should take place, *at least a thousand years must elapse!*

This seems to me the most cogent—and (if our Lord's words, exhorting to watchfulness, be admitted to refer to His own second coming in power and great glory,) a conclusive argument for the ante-millennial advent of the Son of God!

It must, however, in all fairness, be admitted, that from the manner in which our Lord, in that memorable discourse, concerning His second coming, has interwoven the description of that event, and its precursory and attendant signs, with the prophetic descriptions of its awful type—His coming, in avenging power, for the destruction of Jerusalem, it is extremely difficult to disentangle what He appears to have intentionally involved in great obscurity—and accordingly some commentators refer, in their primary signification, those words of our Lord, which appear to form so conclusive an argument, for His pre-millennial advent, to His coming in the manifestation of His righteous vengeance, and the ministry of its appointed executioners, to destroy the devoted city, over which, in the prospect of its impending ruin, He had wept.

May it not then have been purposely arranged, that such a degree of obscurity should hang over the

prophetical announcements of the *precise time* of our Lord's second advent, that it could not be determined, with *confident decision*, whether this event would precede or follow the millennial dispensation ; and thus, from the interpretation of such passages being involved in perplexity, there could be no *certainty*, warranted by the word of God, that the Saviour might not, at any period, suddenly appear—which uncertainty, as to the proper interpretation of the prophetical statements, (*whatever* their true import might, by the result, be found to be,) would obviously answer all the purposes contemplated in the exhortation of our Lord, and tend to keep His faithful followers—those who, in a scriptural sense, are ready for His appearing, as to a state of *acceptance*, by being washed in His blood, and clothed in His righteousness, to keep them habitually ready, as to a state of *spiritual preparation*, by stimulating them to maintain an attitude of uninterrupted watchfulness, in a patient and prayerful spirit, powerfully promoted by the uncertainty, in which they would continually be held, as to the day or hour, when the Lord they loved, and for whom they were looking, would appear !

CHAPTER X.

ADDRESS TO MILLENNARIANS.

I WOULD now proceed to point out, I trust, in a spirit of Christian faithfulness and love, some of the dangers, to which your attachment to the millennarian scheme seems to expose you ; and to offer you, in unfeigned humility, a few hints of affectionate advice.

1. Beware of allowing your peculiar views of the millennarian scheme to assume an aspect of undue, because *unscriptural*, importance in your eyes ; which unquestionably they will do, if they are allowed to be classed with those truths, which are to be believed as of necessity for salvation—and thus to usurp the place assigned in Scripture, to the doctrine of Christ crucified—taking the words in the full extent of their scriptural import, as comprehending both the atoning sacrifice, and sanctifying influences, of the cross of Christ.

I cannot deem this caution altogether superfluous, as I have reason to believe, that some evangelical ministers, attached to millennarian views, have refused to preach in a brother-minister's pulpit, if not

permitted to introduce and enforce, as essential for salvation, their peculiar opinions of the personal reign of Christ.

This, I must confess, seems to me a most deplorable error. What ! shall a faithful ambassador of a crucified Saviour, entrusted with the message of redeeming love, the ministry of reconciliation, refuse to deliver *that* message, and discharge *that* ministry—refuse to proclaim to perishing sinners the glad tidings of everlasting salvation, through the blood of the Cross, if he is not permitted to accompany the joyful proclamation with his own peculiar views of a matter, which has divided the speculative sentiments of God's most faithful servants, and most honoured saints ?

Is it not the very essence of the good news, which the gospel proclaims, that “unto us, sinners, is born a Saviour, willing and able to save, unto the uttermost, all that come unto God by Him ; for that God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, as a propitiation for our sins, that whosoever believeth on Him with a living faith, that worketh by love, should not perish, but have everlasting life !”

Now, is it to be maintained, that an awakened sinner, cordially believing all this, deeply humbled under a sense of guilt, thoroughly convinced both of his own sinfulness, and of the perfect suitableness and sufficiency of the Almighty Saviour, revealed in the gospel of the grace of God, even Jehovah-Jesus, clinging to *His* cross with the grasp of a lively faith, and reposing on His righteousness with the confidence

of an undivided trust, while affectionately desirous from a principle of constraining love, to walk in that Saviour's footsteps, to keep His commandments, to copy His character, and live to His glory—is it, I say, for one moment to be maintained, that *such* an individual cannot be saved, unless he believe in the præ-millennial advent, and personal reign of the Redeemer, and all the other accompaniments of the Millenarian scheme!

Would it not be a very waste of time, to engage in an elaborate refutation of an opinion, so outraging the plainest declarations of the word of God?

But even where so obviously unscriptural an opinion is not held, if persons, attached to millenarian views, allow the enforcement of the peculiarities of their system to be substituted, in the general tenor of their ministrations, whether public or private, for the preaching of the cross, this departure from the scriptural standard will inevitably be followed, as might be expected, by the most disastrous results. The great end of preaching, or the proclamation of gospel truth, even the advancement of the glory of God, in the salvation of man, will not be attained by such instrumentality. *Whatever may be effected, winning souls to Christ will not be accomplished by such means.*

For what is God's divinely-appointed instrument, for effecting the spiritual regeneration and salvation of lost and guilty man? What is it which displays the love of God, with such overwhelming power of demonstration, and persuasiveness of appeal, as makes

it the most monstrous and inexcusable guilt to disbelieve that love, and thus effectually paves the way for the love of God taking possession of the heart of man? What is it which exhibits the divine condescension and clemency, under such an endearing aspect that, when once the loving-kindness of Jehovah, as manifested in that exhibition, is cordially believed, the natural enmity of the human heart against God is immediately subdued—the arms of rebellion are instantaneously flung down—softened contrition, and adoring gratitude, take the place of hardened impenitence, and sullen hatred, in the sinner's soul ; and all the awful attributes of the Almighty, instead of being regarded with agonizing terror, as the attributes of an angry Judge, arrayed against the sinner, and threatening him with everlasting destruction, are contemplated with joyful trust, as the attributes of a reconciled Father, all pledged and put forth for the everlasting happiness of the children of His love? What is it which can alone speak peace to the convinced sinner's soul, trembling under the sense of guilt, and the fear of God's wrath? What alone can tranquillize his terrors, by showing him how his offended God can extend to him a free and full forgiveness, however deeply dyed, or awfully aggravated, his sins may have been, without compromising, in the least degree, the strictest claims of His justice ; because the demands of Jehovah's broken law, and insulted attributes, have been fully satisfied by a sacrifice, of such infinite dignity and value, that higher honour is put upon that law, and brighter glory poured round those attributes,

by the salvation of a single soul, through the medium of *that* sacrifice, than would have resulted from the everlasting destruction of the whole human race, had no such sacrifice been offered up? What alone can enable the trembling sinner to rest his hopes of pardon, and peace with God, on such a firm foundation as this?

Is it not the cross—the infinitely meritorious cross of Christ, where mercy and truth meet together!—where righteousness and peace embrace each other?

Is it not this too, which, by the awful and affecting exhibition of the infinite hatefulness of sin, as displayed in the tremendous sufferings, endured by God's dear Son for its expiation, inspires the pardoned sinner with an abhorrence of sin, proportioned, in its intensity, to the depth of his gratitude towards the God of his salvation; and thus at once breathes peace over his spirit, and purity into his soul?

Where alone also can we learn in their full meaning, measure, and motives, the divine lessons of Christian patience and resignation—meekness and humility—forgiveness and love? Where alone feel, in its full force, a divine influence, emanating on our souls, by which the spell that binds us to the world can be broken—the chains of Satan snap asunder—the tyranny of sinful lusts and appetites subdued; and all the affections, desires, and energies of our renewed hearts, and sanctified spirits, concentrated on this one object—that Christ may be magnified in us, and by us, whether by our life or by our death! Oh, is it not at the foot of the cross *alone*, that these lessons

can be savingly learned—that this influence can be fully felt!

Need I, in confirmation of these assertions, appeal to the word of God, which supplies an unbroken attestation, from its commencement to its close, to their supremely important truth?

Need I remind you of the great Apostle's solemn determination, to know nothing among his Corinthian converts, "but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified;" *because* he knew, that "Christ crucified was the wisdom of God, and the power of God, unto salvation, to every one that believeth?" Or need I recall to your recollection his solemn exclamation, into which he appears to pour, as it were, his whole heart and soul—"God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world!"

Or may I not sum up the substance of scriptural testimony, on this subject, by an appeal to the highest of all authorities, delivered in one of the weightiest sentences, that ever fell even from the Redeemer's lips?—

"I," says Jesus, "if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." Lifted up! on what? A Millennial throne of glory? No! He, who formed the human heart, knew too well its mysterious mechanism, and the motives best calculated to work on its secret springs of action, so as to make them subservient to the glory of God, to expect such a result from the exhibition of His millennial majesty, even

admitting that He is to reign, in visible regal splendour, on a renovated earth.

He knew that the heart of man, which is so often hardened into an attitude of more determined hatred, and more daring defiance, by the denunciations of divine wrath, can alone be melted down into a state of subdued and softened contrition and gratitude, by the display of divine love—of which the brightest, that has ever burst on our world, shone forth, with such surpassing glory round His cross.

“ I, if I be lifted up will draw all men unto me.”
“ This He spake, (is the comment of inspiration,) signifying *what death* He should die.”

Yes ; the Son of God knew that it was by His being lifted up, in the preaching of His faithful ministers, *not* on a millennial throne, *but* on Calvary's cross, that all men would be drawn towards Him, by the irresistible attractions of Redeeming love.

He knew that it was the belief of His love, in laying down His life for us—offering up *Himself*, amidst the inconceivable agonies of the cross, as a sacrifice for our sins—dying, that we might live for ever—which would overpower into grateful submission, and unreserved devotedness, the heart which *can* hold out, in determined rebellion, against the thundered curses of God's broken law, but *cannot* hold out against this exhibition of divine self-sacrificing love, when once, through the power of the Holy Ghost, it is cordially believed. And, therefore, aware as He was, that His cross was to prove the great magnet of spiritual attraction, whereby human hearts

would be drawn, to be united in an everlasting union of love and obedience, to Himself, *therefore* did He enjoin that the proclamation of this, His heart-subduing love—the preaching of this, His soul-attracting cross, should form the substance of the gospel-message, which His ministers should deliver, for the purpose of rescuing sinners from Satan, and reconciling and reuniting them to God.

And has not the history of Christianity, in every age, verified the truth of the Redeemer's prophecy, and established the justice of His expectation?

Has not the cross of Christ uniformly proved the grand attractive to the heart of man, drawing it away from the love of sin, to the love of holiness—from the service of Satan, to the service of God?

Was it not the faithful preaching of Christ crucified, which enabled a few illiterate fishermen to accomplish the moral miracle, in the renovation of the human character, which all the combined wisdom, philosophy, and eloquence of Greece and Rome had failed to effect?

And in every clime and country which Christianity has visited, has not the success of missionary labours been uniformly in proportion to the degree, in which the heralds of salvation have simply, faithfully, and affectionately, preached Christ crucified? Has it not ever been before the uplifted cross, displaying, in such glorious manifestation, the divine presence and power, that the Dagon of Heathen superstition, idolatry, and guilt, has fallen to the ground?

Is not this the reason, why such a special blessing

has rested on the Moravian Missions, even because their delegated ministers go forth, in simple reliance on the power and promises of God, with the love of the Saviour burning in their hearts, and the cross of the Saviour uplifted in their hands, to proclaim the message of salvation through the blood of that cross, wherever their voice will be heard, leaving the result, with cheerful confidence, to Him, who, (they seem abidingly and believingly to remember,) hath said—"I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me."

Oh, yes, I do believe there is nothing which Satan so much fears, nothing which he so intensely hates to hear, as the simple, affectionate, faithful, preaching of Christ crucified, set forth as the only foundation of the sinner's hope and confidence—the all-attractive stimulant to the believer's entire devotedness of heart and life.

Animating discussions about unfulfilled prophecy, ingenious speculations about the millennarian scheme—profound calculations about prophetic dates—all, in their subordinate place, most interesting and valuable; but still, Satan can witness all these going forward, with but little alarm, because they have so little tendency to shake his usurped dominion over the human heart.

But when this malignant spirit hears a devoted Christian minister expatiating, with heartfelt and heart-affecting eloquence, on that sweetest of all themes—a Saviour's love—telling how such tender compassion to perishing sinners burned in the bosom of the Son of God, that He could not bear to con-

template the prospect of their eternal destruction, but flew, on the wings of redeeming love, to their relief; though He was well aware, that, in His generous effort to save them, He must sacrifice Himself—and how, in fulfilment of this infinitely gracious undertaking, the Divine Philanthropist descended from heaven, and tabernacled upon earth, as a Man of sorrows, and toiled, and travailed, and wept, and agonized, and bled, and died—even the death of the cross—and how, He now ever liveth to make intercession for those, for whom He once died—and is willing and able to save, unto the uttermost, *all* that come unto God by Him, with a free, full, and complete salvation, inestimable, in its preciousness, as His own blood; and enduring, in its glory, as the ages of eternity—oh, when Satan hears such preaching as this, *then* indeed he trembles—for, by the experience of near two thousand years, he knows, that while they are listening to this wondrous story of mysterious love, his captives are brought within the hearing of tidings—the sphere of influences—which, more than any other, are calculated to emancipate them from the slavery, in which he has so long held them enthralled.

If then, beloved Millennarian friends, you would indeed wish, abidingly, to feel Jesus precious to yourselves, or make Him precious to others; if you would enjoy, in your own souls, the substantial, satisfying peace of the gospel—that peace, which the believer derives from an undivided dependence on the infinite merits of his Almighty Surety, and which is essential

to your holy and happy walk with God: if you would maintain, reigning in full supremacy in your hearts, the love of Jesus—that love, which, clothed with invincible power from on high, goes forth, conquering and to conquer all the enemies of your salvation, and is the source and stimulant of all acceptable evangelical obedience; if, like the apostle, forgetting the things that are behind, and pressing forward to those which are before, you would advance by a perpetual progress in the path of holiness—that holiness, whose value, in the sight of God, is most gloriously exhibited in the sacrifice of Calvary, and “without which no man shall see the Lord;” or if you would desire to be instrumental in exciting or cherishing these blessed feelings in others—if you thirst after the happiness of attracting sinners to the Saviour—or the honour, awaiting those, who, having turned many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars, for ever and ever, then let the cross of Christ hold *that* place in your private meditations, or public ministry—your secret communion with your God, or social converse with your friends, which is uniformly assigned to it, in the word of God—a place of paramount and presiding authority! Whatever subordinate station may be allowed to your peculiar views of Millennarian prophecies, as attendant satellites, let the cross be the sun of your system of religious truth and ministration—from which every Christian doctrine and duty, every spiritual promise and precept, will be exhibited, as deriving all their light, and all their glory!

However your spirit may be exalted, or gladdened by the prospect of the anticipated glories of Mount Sion, let the stupendous love displayed upon Mount Calvary be still your first, your favourite—I had almost said, your constant theme. And rest assured, all your labours of love, on behalf of sinners, will be most glorifying and acceptable to God, and most abundantly blest to their souls, in direct proportion to the degree, in which these labours serve, in their estimation and affections, to exalt and endear the cross of Christ!

But if you depose this glorious object from its place of rightful supremacy in the gospel scheme, *no matter what* you may put in its stead—if you substitute, in your general system of ministration, the preaching even of Christ glorified, for the preaching of Christ crucified—the doctrine of the Millennium, for the doctrine of the cross—if, instead of expatiating habitually on the Redeemer's love, and character, and offices, and work—the all-sufficient sacrifice He offered upon Calvary—the sweet solid peace which a simple trust in that sacrifice imparts—the powerful motives to a life of holiness and grateful devotedness to the Redeemer's service which it supplies, you direct an exclusive or even a primary degree of attention—*not* (observe) to those grand general views, connected with the second coming of Christ, which we have endeavoured to prove can be made subservient to such important practical results, but to detailed and elaborate discussions about points, deeply interesting indeed, but still of decidedly

subordinate value, because not essential to salvation—if, in a word, you occupy your time in *prophesying*, rather than in *preaching*—in predicting how unfulfilled prophecy is to be accomplished, rather than in proclaiming how perishing sinners are to be saved, or pointing out how converted sinners are to be made meet for heaven—then—so impregnated, at present, is the atmosphere of the religious world with the spirit of excitement on such subjects, that I doubt not your labours—(particularly if characterized by talent, and ingenuity, and research,) will be rewarded with the admiration and applause of attentive and delighted auditors; but they will assuredly miss the far nobler recompense of awakened and humbled sinners, rescued from Satan, and reconciled to God! The hushed silence of intense interest—the animated glow of gratified feelings, will wait upon your ministry; but the far more precious tribute of tears of contrite sorrow, and devout gratitude, and holy joy, gushing from hearts, melted under a sense of redeeming love, will be wanting there! Your preaching may be felt to be powerful to captivate your hearers' imaginations—to engage their intellects, or even to touch their hearts; but it will be found to be powerless, for the far higher and holier office, of Christianizing their characters—sanctifying their spirits—and saving their souls!

CHAPTER XI.

ADDRESS TO MILLENNARIANS.

THE second caution I would affectionately suggest is this:—In your contemplation or exhibition of the believer's promised inheritance of blessedness and glory, beware of allowing what is merely *circumstantial* and *temporary*, to usurp the place of what is *essential* and *eternal*.

The essence of a believer's final and eternal blessedness consists, in perfect conformity to the divine image, and everlasting enjoyment of the divine presence.

“When He, a Saviour-God, shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him, as He is,”—“and so we shall be for ever with the Lord!” These two sentences contain the substance of the believer's promised inheritance of bliss for eternity.

Perfect holiness, and uninterrupted communion and converse with the Lord—in these the *essence* of his happiness is contained. All else is but the concomitant appendages, which may enlarge the sphere, and multiply the channels, of his eternal enjoyment, but are not essential to its existence.

To be like God, in every feature of moral excellence, and communicable perfection, in which the creature can resemble the Creator—and, in this state of capacitated meetness for the enjoyment of communion with God, to live for ever in the light of His countenance, assured of being eternally the object of His unchangeable love, and enabled to render Him unweariedly the homage of an acceptable devotion of spirit, heart, and life, this (I would again and again repeat the declaration)—*this* is the grand outline of the believer's prospect of eternal bliss.

The filling up of the picture in detail—the region, in which he may be placed—the scenery, by which he may be surrounded—the society, with which he may be conversant—or the services, in which he may be engaged—all these are merely circumstantial; they may indeed tinge with peculiar colouring, of a very lovely hue, the happiness of which he shall partake, but they do not enter into its *essence*—*this* is altogether distinct from, and independent of them all.

For were we to suppose them all destroyed—the visible glories and beauties of the material universe annihilated—and the innumerable company of angels and redeemed spirits, in consequence of some general apostacy, cast out of Heaven, all, except one single loyal servant of God—yet would even that solitary faithful one, though the only created inhabitant of Heaven, find in the presence of the triune God the fulness of joy, and at His right hand pleasures for evermore.

I say not, that in losing such glorious scenery, and

still more in losing such glorious society, he would sustain no loss—for two sources of peculiarly exalted and endeared enjoyment would be thus dried up—but I do say, that in the Fountain of all felicity he would find an abundant, an infinite compensation for the loss of all, which the purest streams ever supplied—I do say, that in the presence, the smile, and the service of the ever-blessed God, that solitary worshipper before the throne would enjoy full, perfect, and satisfying happiness, for ever and ever.

If *this* be so, (and to deny it were to be guilty of the impiety of denying the sufficiency of the adorable Creator, in Himself, for the happiness of the creature,) then surely it must form a *comparatively* small item, in the estimate of the believer's promised inheritance of eternal glory, what particular views he may hold concerning the millennarian reign.

Surely no prospect of blessedness—bounded by a thousand years—(even were these to be reckoned as prophetic years, and so the entire period to consist of 360,000 years,) can be regarded as more than a particle of the far more exceeding and *eternal* weight of glory, purchased for the believer with the Redeemer's blood, and laid up for him *in Heaven*.

Can it then, in this view, be considered as more than a subordinate point of interest or importance, whether the Redeemer's reign on earth during the millennial dispensation, and the first resurrection, are to be understood in a literal, or exclusively in a spiritual sense.

For as the believer is, through the amazing riches

of divine grace, a joint-heir with Christ, if the Redeemer's millennial reign be exclusively spiritual, a reign consisting in the universal diffusion of the knowledge, and influence of the spirit of His gospel, then may all His saints, who, before that reign commences, shall have departed from earth, to be with Christ, and who participate in all His triumphs, and rejoice in all His joy, be said, (in a spiritual sense,) to live and reign with Christ, on earth, during the thousand years; though neither the Saviour, nor His saints should, during that period, descend from Heaven, to reign in visible glory, on a renovated earth.

But whether this reigning of Christ and His saints on earth, during the millennium, is to be understood in a spiritual or literal sense, can only affect the *circumstances*, not the *essence* of the believer's blessedness—and this only for a period of time, so short, when viewed in the light of eternity, that surely it ought not to be allowed to usurp a *paramount* place in his anticipation and estimate of his promised and purchased inheritance of eternal glory.

How can either view of the millennium affect more than the circumstantial features of his happiness, since, according to either view, the saints who have fallen asleep before the millennial dispensation, will be with Christ—rejoicing in His presence, with joy unspeakable and full of glory—while the chief difference consists in the locality of the reign—the region, *where* they shall rejoice in the Saviour's presence; whether it shall be in Heaven, or on a renovated earth—and surely this, which one may call the geo-

graphy of the question, cannot be considered as *vitally* affecting the happiness of the saints, rejoicing and reigning with Christ !

If the region, where they shall thus reign and rejoice with Him, during the millennial period, shall be a renovated earth—then will His presence make that earth to them as Heaven. But if it shall be Heaven itself, then will His presence still be to them the Heaven of that Heaven !

To be with Jesus—this is all they desire ! this is *all* that is *indispensable* for the perfectly satisfying happiness of those who love Him, and are like Him ! To them it is *comparatively* immaterial, whether they shall *remain with Him* in Heaven, or *descend with Him* to earth for the thousand years. In either case, they shall be with the Lord, and *that* is to them all in all. Where He is, must to them be Heaven !

Now, I cannot but think, that there is a tendency, in some zealous votaries of the millennarian scheme, to allow their views to be too much bounded, and their anticipations of future blessedness and glory too much engrossed, by the prospect of the thousand years, during which they hope to reign with Christ upon earth—and that the hope they so fondly cherish, that a renovated earth will be the region, where the reign of these thousand years will be held, is (almost unconsciously to themselves,) permitted to occupy too prominent a place in that vista view of millennial glory, on which they delight to fasten, with too absorbing an attention and interest, the eye of faith.

And I cannot but fear that their own spirits suffer

loss, in reference to the influence, which their habitual anticipations of the glory reserved for them must exercise, both over their character and their happiness, by a merely circumstantial feature of that glory—the temporary scene where they hope a portion of it will be displayed, being thus allowed to take the place of its essential substance—the eternal blessedness they shall enjoy in the *presence* of the Lord in Heaven.

For as the mind, (and through its medium the character,) takes its tone and colouring from the objects with which it is habitually brought in contact, especially those which it selects for its cherished contemplation, and as its aims and aspirations, and characteristic pursuits, will be grand and sublime, in proportion to the grandeur and sublimity of the prospect, on which it habitually delights to dwell, must not a serious loss be sustained, in this respect, by the believer who, in his contemplation of the inheritance reserved for him, as a joint-heir with Christ, is accustomed to substitute the happiness of a few years for the happiness of everlasting ages—the scenery and society of a renovated earth, for the scenery and society of heaven—and the glories of the millennium, for the glories of eternity.

Besides, is it not to be feared, that there is a tendency, in the manner in which millennialian views are sometimes stated, to carnalize the spirit, by giving too prominent an exhibition to those external appendages of pomp, and power, and beautiful scenery, and all the concomitant attractions of an

earthly stamp, which some associate with their anticipations of the Millennial reign ; and throwing too much into the back ground those internal and divine attractions of a spiritual character, (such as perfect conformity to the Saviour's image—full participation of His meek, and lowly and loving spirit—the complete conquest over every sinful appetite or thought—and the entire identification of the will of the renewed soul with the will of God,) which must constitute the essential glory and happiness of those, who shall be capacitated to share in the triumphs of the Redeemer's (whether personal, or exclusively spiritual) reign.

Is there not a danger, lest the mild lustre of inward holiness should be eclipsed by the dazzling splendour of millennial visions of external glory ?

May not the natural ambition of the human heart be gratified, by the anticipation of the dignity, and dominion, and all the magnificent insignia of regal authority, with which, (according to the views of some interpreters of prophecy,) the risen saints are to be invested, during the millennial reign ?

May not the prospect of sitting on thrones, and swaying sceptres, and triumphing over persecutors, please and thus pamper that very pride, and love of power, and resentment against enemies, which are such dominant principles in our fallen nature, and which it is such a special design of the religion of the gospel utterly to eradicate.

May not an unconverted character be thus indulging all the uncrucified and unsanctified appetites

and affections of an unrenewed heart, only baptized with new names, and excited by new objects? Vanity, feasting itself on the promise of a glorified body, shining like the sun—resentment, dignified with the title of zeal for God—and ambition, priding itself in the prospect of ruling the nations, and reigning with Christ!

And thus the victim of a deep and most dangerous delusion may be delighting himself in dreams of millennial triumph, and glory, and bliss; at the very moment that the whole bent and bias of his character, in the sight of a heart-searching God, are seen to be in direct opposition to the temper and spirit of that gospel, the triumphant establishment of whose principles will assuredly be the noblest triumph of the millennial reign; at the very moment he ought to be prostrate on his knees, at the foot of the cross, crying out—"God be merciful to me a sinner! Create in me a clean heart, and renew a *right spirit* within me."

Again, there are individuals, endued with such an intense admiration and love for the beautiful scenery of creation, that they cannot contemplate its loftier or lovelier features, without feeling their souls awed by its grandeur, or elevated by its sublimity, or soothed by its softness, or affected by its tenderness, even to tears. And with this capacity for thus sympathising, as it were, with the spirit of external nature, there is often linked a kind of natural piety—(if one may so call it,) producing a species of sentimental adoration of the majesty, and gratitude for

the goodness, of the Being, whose attributes are mirrored in the glass of this fair world.

And all this may be felt, without one spark of spiritual life having been imparted to the enthusiastic worshipper of nature, and, (in one sense,) of nature's God.

Now, when such an individual meets with glowing descriptions of the more than paradisaical beauty of the renovated earth, with the fascinating vision of angels and glorified saints, wandering together through its lovely scenery, or resting together in its peaceful shades—the imagination may be so captivated with the prospect of scenes, surpassing in every attribute of grace and grandeur, all that poet's fancy ever painted, that the deluded enthusiast may mistake the inspirations of poetry for the aspirations of piety—the kindlings of a heated imagination for the glow of a devout heart—and may thus regard, as the evidence of a supernatural and divinely-implanted taste, the delight, which is traceable to a purely-natural source.

And thus it is that, by want of congeniality with His character, in its essential attributes of the love of righteousness and hatred of iniquity, an unrenewed admirer of nature may be utterly unfitted for the enjoyment of the society of the Saviour, and companionship with His angels and glorified saints, in all their high, and holy, and heavenly pursuits, and pleasures, and may yet cherish the dangerous delusion, that he is capacitated for enjoying the blessedness of the millennial reign, because he finds in

himself such a capacity for relishing those representations of the beautiful scenery of a renovated earth, in which too much of the pictured happiness of that reign is made to consist.

That you may not be instrumental in fostering dangerous delusions, let me earnestly entreat of you, beloved friends in Christ, who are strongly attached to millennial views, in your pictures of the blessedness of the millennial reign, to keep back in the shade, reduced to their proper size and subordinate station, all those external appendages, to which we have alluded ; and place, in full light, and at full length, in the very foreground of the picture, that holiness, which is the very essence of a believer's happiness ; for without it, happiness is altogether unattainable by any created being, whether during the millennial or any other dispensation—whether on a renovated earth, or even in the very centre of all the glory, and all the blessedness of heaven !

Constantly keep in view the all-important truth, that the *essential* qualification for participating in the triumphs of the Redeemer's reign, is participation in the spirit of the Redeemer's character—that whatever else that reign may possess, of adventitious and outward glory, it will be essentially the reign of righteousness ; and, *therefore*, none can enjoy its happiness, or share its honours, but those, in whose hearts the love of righteousness maintains the entire ascendancy, and in whose lives the law of righteousness exercises a sovereign sway. That thrones and sceptres could do no more than toys and straws, for

the real happiness of one, who had not learned of Him, that is meek and lowly of heart, to rule his own spirit by the divine precepts of the gospel of peace, and to sway over his obedient passions the divine sceptre of a Saviour's love; and that neither the scenery of paradise, nor the society of angels—no, nor even the scenery and society of heaven itself, could impart one hour's solid and satisfying enjoyment to any spirit, which was not identified, by perfect harmony of sentiment, and sympathy of feeling, with the spirit of Christ!

Hold up then the character of the Saviour, for the prayerful study, and humble imitation of all, who hope they have a title, written in His blood, and resting on His righteousness, to the inheritance of glory, purchased by Him for all His saints.

Constantly cherish and enforce the solemn recollection, that it is only those who, in the spirit of their *characters*, like Him, have not been of this world, that shall, with Him, be heirs of that *kingdom*, which is not of this world—that those alone who have suffered with Him, shall also reign with Him—those alone who have been crucified, shall be glorified with Him; and that it is only by being planted together in the likeness of His death, (death to sin, to the world, to whatever opposes the will, or word, or glory of God,) that we shall be planted together in the likeness of His resurrection!

Dwell, then, frequently on the development of the Christian character, in detail, always presenting the Saviour's, as its only perfect pattern—its only infal-

lible standard! Exhibit its various features in their full proportion—and place them in their loveliest light!

Purity of heart, shrinking, with instinctive abhorrence, from the indulgence even of an unhallowed thought—spirituality of affections, soaring, as on eagle-wing, with all its ardent aspirations, towards heaven—a prayerful spirit, cultivating constant communion with the Father of spirits; and making every object in creation, every dispensation of Providence, a medium of holy and happy intercourse with its God—humility, hiding its own excellencies; and charity, concealing the faults of others—meekness and gentleness, bearing, with the most unruffled patience, the most irritating provocations—placability, freely forgiving, from the heart, the most aggravated injuries and insults—cheerful trust in God's love, amidst the darkest dispensations—thankful resignation to His will, amidst His heaviest chastisements—a generous philanthropy, delighting in going about, doing good, (in the sublimest sense of the word,) alleviating human misery, and promoting human happiness, to the utmost extent of its influence—and a grateful zeal for the glory of God, prompting the most unwearied labours, the most unbounded self-denial, the most costly sacrifices, and infusing sweetness into the bitterest sufferings, by which that glory may be advanced!

Such are some of the prominent features of the Christian character!—such some of the principal ingredients, which enter into the composition of that

noblest piece of God's workmanship upon earth—a spirit conformed to the image of His Son!

So far as the exhibition of millennarian prospects can be made subservient towards the formation and perfection of *such* a character, advance them, in this view, and for this purpose—ever keeping in remembrance, that the clearest speculative views of unfulfilled prophecy, the most eloquent advocacy of the millennarian scheme, unaccompanied by *such* a cast of character, could no more qualify their possessor for the enjoyment of the essential blessedness of Messiah's reign, than clear views of mathematical truth, or eloquent advocacy of the Baconian system of philosophy!

And are not *prophetical* speculations, and calculations, too often carried on in a manner, that can no more conduce to the believer's spiritual advancement in the divine life, than the investigations of *philosophical* principles, or *scientific* pursuits?

And worst of all—are not millennarian discussions too often conducted, in a temper and spirit, of *such a stamp*, that their universal diffusion would make the millennium anything, but the reign of universal peace, and harmony, and love!

Let me, then, in taking leave of this part of our subject, affectionately entreat of you to remember, that millennarian discussions, when conducted in such a manner, as to have no tendency to lead sinners to cling more confidently to the cross, and copy more closely the character of Christ, can be considered only as ingenious speculations—amusing, perhaps, but cer-

tainly unprofitable; that when conducted, so as to tend towards an opposite result, they can only (as far as means are concerned,) help to retard the progress of the Redeemer's gospel upon earth, and advance the cause of Satan, not of God; and that it is *only* when they are so conducted, in reference to the light in which they are viewed, and the spirit in which they are carried on, as to tend towards exalting and endearing the cross and character of Christ, that they will be accompanied, in their course, by the outpourings of the divine blessing, and instrumental, in their results, in advancing the divine glory!

CHAPTER XII.

ADDRESS TO MILLENNARIANS.

THE third friendly caution I would address to you, is this—Beware of being betrayed into any approach to an over-confident and dogmatical tone, in the announcement of your peculiar views, as if some special revelation of the spirit, securing you from the possibility of mistake, had been vouchsafed to you, so that you were privileged to set forth, and all others bound to receive, your interpretation of unfulfilled prophecy, as divinely communicated, and therefore infallibly true!

Nothing can be more unbecoming, or more unpleasing, than such a tone, on such a theme.

To preserve your spirit from being ensnared into it, ever keep in remembrance, what a veil of obscurity God's own hand has flung, for the wisest and most gracious purposes, over the subject of unfulfilled prophecy—how He has shadowed out its scenes in visionary representations, and announced its predictions in symbolical language, whose precise import it is necessarily most difficult to ascertain.

Remember also how extremely difficult it is, to draw the exact boundary line between what is literal and what is figurative, in prophetic announcements ; and how much may be said, and has been said, with almost equal appearance of fairness and force, both in the way of sound reasoning, and scriptural testimony, in favour of the literal and the spiritual interpretation, on these disputed points.

Recollect, too, how differently you yourselves once thought on these subjects, when perhaps, your love to the Saviour, your trust in His salvation, your zeal for His glory, and your conformity to His character, were altogether as deeply felt, and strongly marked, as they at present are—and recollect, *also*, how differently you may *yet* think on these subjects, from what you do now.

Since, therefore, you have no security that your present views may not, in the course of further study, be altogether abandoned, or, at least, modified by material alterations, take good heed, lest, by passing a severe sentence against all who do not coincide with your present opinions, you may be passing a severe anticipatory sentence of condemnation against your future selves.

Above all, I would entreat of you to keep in constant recollection, how many of God's most faithful and honoured servants have arrived at conclusions, on all these controverted points, the very opposite of yours ; and since this is the case with some, on whom God has set the special stamp of His divine approbation, making their ministry pre-eminently in-

strumental in winning souls to Christ, and thus advancing His own glory upon earth, beware of offending *Him*, by speaking in the least degree bitterly of those, whom He loves ; or slightly of those whom He delighteth to honour.

Were I then addressing a millennarian, disposed to dogmatise, I would say to him—How can you, when *such men*, who have been, for so many years, distinguished standard-bearers in the army of the Captain of our salvation—men, on whom God has set such a special seal of his love and blessing—when such men differ from you, on these confessedly non-essential points, how can you, in the face of this fact, feel or express undoubting confidence that, in the points about which you and they differ, *you* are infallibly right, and *they* unquestionably, wrong ?

Let me, in the spirit of Christian faithfulness, deal honestly with you, and ask—What proofs can you produce of your assumed infallibility ? Who has invested you with such a peculiar prerogative ? Where are your credentials, in support of such extraordinary claims ?

Do you appeal to the Scriptures, in confirmation of your peculiar views ?

So do those men of God, who, with equal reverence for the Scriptures, dissent altogether from those views.

Have you prayed to be freed from all prejudice, in the investigation of this subject, and to be guided, by the divine illumination and direction of the Holy Spirit, into all truth ?

So have they, with prayers as humble, as sincere, as fervent, as frequent, as yours.

Will you appeal to the sanctifying and comforting influences, which you have found to emanate from the views you have embraced?

They have found influence, as full of sanctification and comfort, emanate from the opposite views.

Will you then ground your confident claim to infallibility, in the interpretation of unfulfilled prophecy, on the superior holiness, zeal, faithfulness, and devotedness, which so exalt you above those from whom you differ, as to make it a matter of certainty, or, at least, very great probability, that the Holy Spirit has vouchsafed the true interpretation of prophecy to *you*, and *not to them*?

Now, as humility is the primary grace of the Christian character, I am sure you will not advance this argument in your own favor; and when we look at the characters and lives of several of your opponents, however much and deservedly we esteem, and honor, and love you, as bearing the image, and devoted to the service of Christ, we cannot, in our honest judgment, decide the controversy in your favour by this test.

Should not these considerations constrain you to advance your own arguments, with diffidence and caution; and to regard those of your opponents, especially when urged by holy and honoured servants of God, with candor, and respect.

Weigh their objections to your system, calmly and dispassionately, in the balance of the sanctuary.

Treat their exposition of their own system, faithfully and affectionately, in a spirit of brotherly love.

If, after a patient and prayerful consideration of both, you still are led to regard your own views, as agreeable to the oracles of truth, and the mind of the Spirit, exhibit them, in the full strength of the scriptural testimony on which they seem to you to rest; with the exact measure of scriptural importance, which you think you have discovered them to possess; and, above all, with the scriptural accompaniments, of *practical* results, tending to the advancement of the cause of godliness, and the glory of God, which must constitute, (if they are scriptural,) their chief value, for, were they incapable of such tendencies, the knowledge of them would be nothing worth.

But while it is at once your right, and even your duty, humbly, yet honestly, to state your firm convictions, as to the scriptural truth and importance of your views, ever keep in mind, I affectionately conjure you, that *even apparently* arrogant assumptions of infallibility, (of which you can produce no proof,) or contemptuous expressions towards those who differ from you, (as if you had secured a monopoly of wisdom, and scriptural knowledge, and divine illumination, and all who differed from you were prejudiced opponents of the truth, wilfully, or judicially blind,) such assumptions and expressions cannot give the smallest degree of additional clearness to your reasonings, or weight to your arguments, or power to your proofs, or persuasiveness to your style.

The *only* effect they possibly *can* have, is to induce

a strong suspicion, that those who use them have not been taught their system in the school of Christ, or been supplied with their arguments by the Spirit of God. As there is so much reason to feel convinced, that if the Holy Spirit had been their teacher, He would have imparted, along with His divine instructions, a very different temper and tone from what such observations display.

Must not then the adoption of a style of domineering dogmatism, or contemptuous bitterness, in the discussion of these indisputable points, subject those who adopt it to the suspicion, that, as their spirits are manifestly not humbled or sweetened by the Holy Spirit's influences, so neither may their understandings be enlightened by His illumination; that as the Spirit of humility and love palpably does not reign in their hearts, so neither may the spirit of knowledge and right interpretation rule in their minds—for how can we feel certain, or even think it probable, that the Spirit which has *not* imparted to them a divine temper, *has* instructed them in divine truth.

The last friendly caution I would suggest is the following:—

Beware of allowing the warmth of Christian love to be chilled, or the harmony of Christian communion to be interrupted, between you and any of God's dear children, by any difference of opinion, on these controverted points.

You cannot surely maintain, for a moment, the monstrous assertion, that agreement with you, in all

the peculiarities of the millennarian scheme, is an indispensable criterion of a child of God—or, in other words, that it is impossible to love the Saviour sincerely, to trust in His merits undividedly, to be gratefully zealous for His glory, heartily devoted to His service, and really renewed in His image, without believing in the personal reign, the first resurrection of the saints, and all the other articles of your millennarian creed.

If, therefore, without a belief in these articles, a sinner may savingly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, may love, confide, rejoice, and glory in Him, as an almighty and infinitely precious Saviour, must not *such* an individual be an object of that Saviour's love—a participator with you in all the blessings, and a fellow-heir with you of all the glory, He has purchased for His people, at the inestimably precious price of His own blood.

Now, then, do you mean seriously to assert, that you could love a child of God—one, whom your own Saviour loves—one, who is to spend with you an eternity of blessedness in His presence, you could love that child of God with one spark less of fond fervent brotherly love in Christ, *because* he did not agree with you, in your interpretation of some minor points of unfulfilled prophecy.

The very supposition is an insulting libel on the name of Christian—a deep and foul reproach on the gospel of Christ.

What! is it possible that any diversity of opinion between you and a fellow-Christian, as to the *period*

when the Saviour shall come, or the *place where* you shall spend a *thousand years* with Him can have the smallest influence in chilling the glow of fervent affection towards each other, which ought to be kindled by the prospect, of which you both feel equally assured,) of spending an *eternity* of love and happiness together in that Saviour's presence?

To exhibit more clearly the monstrous inconsistency of such conduct, take the following illustration—

A father is separated, for a season, from a family, all whose members love him with equal ardour of affection, and long for his return, with equal intensity of desire.

During his absence, he sends to his fondly remembered family a letter, breathing the tenderest love in every line, and promising a speedy return to his home. But, while all the children equally rejoice in the glad tidings, and look forward, with equal delight, to the fulfilment of his promise, from some obscurity in the expressions, used in the part of the letter which refers to his return, two of the children differ in their interpretation of the meaning of those expressions, so that one expects his father home a few days sooner than the other does; nor can they perfectly agree as to the manner, in which he will come, and some other minute circumstances, attending his return. And for *this* reason, *because* they *thus* differ on *these* points, those two children of the same father, who equally love him, and whom he equally loves, feel their affections alienated from each other; and

quarrel together ; and call each other abusive and reproachful names ; and ascribe each other's difference of interpretation to the worst motives ; and refuse to sit down together any longer at the same family meal, or to manifest, towards each other any further expressions of brotherly love.

What would you think of the conduct of these children ? and what would their father feel, when the account of it reached his ears ?

Yet is this but a faint, a very faint image of the monstrous inconsistency, exhibited by many professing Christians in our day ; and of what the Saviour must feel, at seeing the promise of His second coming, which He intended should be a kind of sacred cement, to bind the hearts of all His beloved people together, by a communion of interest in all the glorious prospects connected with that coming, perverted into an occasion of alienating their affections from each other, and sowing amongst them the seeds of disunion, dissension, and dislike.

Oh ! it is a most mysterious dispensation of the Most High, that Satan should be permitted to introduce *such* divisions, through *such* a channel, into the very bosom of the Church of Christ ; and it is, we doubt not, regarded by that malignant spirit with pre-eminent pride, as one of the most splendid triumphs of Satanic power and skill.

To pervert the promise of the advent of the Prince of Peace, coming to set up a kingdom of universal peace, into an occasion of producing disturbance and division among the loyal subjects of that Prince—to

extract from the sweet hope of the appearing of Incarnate Love, manifested for the very purpose of establishing an empire of universal love—to extract from this sweet hope the envenomed poison of contention, and almost hatred to each other, to be infused into the hearts of those, who hope to be participants together in the blessedness of that reign of love—this—this is assuredly a most amazing, a most melancholy proof of the power, that the author of all evil is permitted to exercise over the movements of the Church of Christ—the hearts of the children of God.

And what are the deplorable results ?

The Church, which ought to exhibit the aspect of Jerusalem of old, in the days of her peace and glory, built as a city at unity with itself, exhibits rather, in our day the aspect of Jerusalem, when the hour of her desolation was drawing nigh—a city in a state of insurrection, convulsed with all the distractions and horrors of a civil war !

Her faithful children, that ought to be her guardians and defenders, stationed on their watch-towers, or marshalling their forces, counselling, encouraging, comforting each other, and thus combining all their united strength against the common foe, are turning, with most unnatural enmity, the weapons of their warfare against each other ; and wasting, in intestine feuds, those energies and resources, which are all so urgently wanted for the church's protection, in this, her day of unparalleled danger and distress.

The world triumphs in this unseemly exhibition of

a divided and distracted church, and tauntingly asks the reproachful question—"Is *this* the religion which, we have heard, breathes the spirit of universal peace and love? Are *these* the followers of Him, who gave, as the badge by which all men might know *His* disciples, that they should love one another? Judging by what we see in the character of many of the most distinguished patrons of Christianity in our day, have we any reason to believe, that it is a religion which emanated from heaven, and was sent by the God of peace and love, on a mission of mercy, to bring 'peace and good-will among men,' down to earth?" "

Alas! alas! where are the footsteps of *this* religion to be discovered in our day?

Do not, I entreat of you, beloved millennarian friends in Christ, as far as you are concerned, give any occasion to the enemies of your God thus to blaspheme!

However strongly attached, from a firm conviction of their scriptural character, to the peculiarities of the millennarian scheme, oh! never exalt them to such an unscriptural station, or pervert them to such an unscriptural purpose, as to derive from them a ground for cherishing towards any child of God, (however widely he may differ from you on these points,) a single spark of an uncharitable spirit, or an unkindly feeling.

Ever keep it fixed in your remembrance, that those children of God, who dissent from your views on this subject, are influenced as entirely by an affectionate

desire to glorify the Saviour, whom you love, as you can be; and that they have no conceivable motive for adopting the interpretation, which they have embraced, except the conviction, resulting from a prayerful and unprejudiced examination of the word of God, that the views they entertain are most agreeable to the declarations of scripture, and the mind of the Spirit, as therein revealed—and surely *this* is not a reason for regarding them with jealousy, and dislike; or speaking of them with bitterness, and contempt.

Give them credit, then, for motives as pure, as you are conscious actuate yourselves—an eye as single—a judgment as unbiassed—a willingness to reverence the authority of the scripture, as sincere—and a desire to be taught by the Spirit of God, as intense, as you claim—(and the claim is cheerfully conceded) in your own case.*

* It is delightful to read any works, on either side of the controversy, written in this spirit—and I gladly record my humble testimony, that some *have* appeared in our day, pre-eminently characterized by its sweet influences—I would specify, by way of example, three—Bickersteth on the Prophecies—Hiddulph's Suggestions—and Gipps on the First Resurrection—the two latter, anti-millennarian; the first, millennarian, in its views.

Bickersteth's work, like every other production of this eminently pious and valuable author, which I have read, derives a peculiar value from the doctrinal soundness of his views, and the scriptural sobriety of his statements. It is throughout deeply imbued with the very essence of the temper and spirit of the gospel; and powerfully calculated, by the practical character of the work, to promote the interests of vital godliness.

It is most attractive to observe the candor, with which this

Habituate yourselves also to dwell on the reflection, that the cordial union of Christian hearts, united in the endearing bonds of brotherly love, and maintaining the strength of their Christian affection, unimpaired by difference of opinion on non-essential points, is immeasurably a more precious thing in itself, and in the sight of God, than the most complete uniformity of sentiment, on every, the minutest speculative point, were this even practicable; which, from the essential constitution of the human mind, it manifestly is not, unless a special miracle (no where promised in scripture,) were to be wrought in almost every individual believer's case!

That this conviction may be deepened, and abidingly influential, compare the passages, in which we are exhorted to maintain and manifest this spirit of brotherly love; their number; their context; the

truly Christian writer states the change that has taken place in his own views; the humility, with which he advances the opinions he has more recently embraced; the cautious moderation, which characterizes all his details; and the affectionate and honorable testimony he bears to every faithful commentator or expositor, who differs from him.

The two anti-millennarian treatises bear the stamp—and breathe the same spirit; and supply a most satisfactory proof, that the children of God *can* discuss this interesting subject, without forgetting the temper and tone which ought to pervade every thing they speak, or write, or do; even a temper and tone, deeply impressed with the stamp of their divine Master's image, in all meekness, holiness, humility, and love! It is really quite refreshing to breathe such an atmosphere of Christian controversy, so free from the storms of earthly passion; so impregnated with the spirit of heavenly love!—"Oh, si sic omnes!"

clearness, with which the duty is exhibited ; the earnestness, with which it is enforced ; the motives, from which it is derived ; and the blessings, with which it is linked—compare these passages, in all these particulars, with the number, (if there be any,) in which unanimity of sentiment, in *all* speculative points, not vitally affecting the essence of a Saviour's glory, or a sinner's hopes, is required from believers, and you cannot, for one moment, hesitate to pronounce, *which* of these two, (an unbroken harmony of brotherly love, or an unbroken unanimity of speculative judgment in non-essentials,) is deemed of most value in the Saviour's sight—*which* is enforced by the strongest arguments, or recommended by the most endearing considerations ; and therefore *which*, as far as your influence is concerned, you should be most afraid of opposing ; and most desirous to promote.

To assist you in forming a right conclusion on this subject, ponder well, I entreat of you, the following passages, about whose meaning there has never been, so far as I am aware, the smallest difference of interpretation, among the children of God ; though it must be confessed, that Christian controversy (and more especially connected with the question of the personal reign of the Lord of peace and love, (has often been carried on in a spirit, which might lead one to suppose, that, in the copies of the scriptures used by the controversialists, there were wanting such passages as—

“ Be kindly affectioned one to another, with

brotherly love ; in honour preferring one another !
Owe no man any thing, but to love one another !
Love is the fulfilling of the law.”*

“ The fruit of the Spirit is love, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness meekness !”† “ If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind !”‡

“ Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking be put away from you, with all malice ; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted—and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us ”§

“ Above all things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness !”|| “ The Lord make you to increase and abound in love, one toward another !” “ for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another !”¶

“ Let brotherly love continue.”**

“ Seing ye have purified your souls, in obeying the truth, through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren—see that you love one another, with a pure heart, *fervently* !” “ Be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another—love as brethren—be pitiful—be courteous—and, above all things, have fervent charity among yourselves !”††

* Rom. xii. 10. xiii. 8. † Gal. v. 22. ‡ Phil. ii. 1, 2.
§ Eph. iv. 31. v. 2. || Col. iii. 14. ¶ 1st Thes. iii. 12.
iv. 9. ** Heb. xiii. 1. †† 1st Pet. i. 22. iii. 8. iv. 8.

“ We know that we have passed from death unto life, *because* we love the brethren. My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us. *God is love!* and *he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him!*”*

Then turn to that exquisite chapter,† where the portraiture of Christian love is sketched and coloured, with such celestial beauty of expression, and brilliancy of tint, that we feel at once, while gazing on it, that the Saviour himself is the divine Original from whom the portrait has been taken; and that the Holy Spirit, both in expressing the likeness, and finishing the picture, must have guided the apostle's hand!

Read that chapter, over and over again, with fervent prayer, that the divine spirit, which breathes through its every line—(which is no other than the spirit of Heaven, and of Heaven's God,) may, like a pervading soul, animate henceforth your whole body of thought, and feeling, and affections; and regulate by its divine principles, your character, conversation, and conduct!

Mark well, I conjure you, the solemn warning contained in its opening verses! And never let the zeal of speculative enquiry, or the ardour of controversial discussion, tempt you to forget, that though you “ could speak with the tongues of men and of

* 1st John iii. 14, 18, iv. 12, 16.

† 1st Cor. xiii.

angels" on the glorious theme of the future destinies of the church of Christ—and though you had "the gift of *prophecy*," and could predict, with infallible certainty, the very hour, when the Son of God shall come; and every, the minutest circumstance of His promised reign—and though you could "understand all mysteries" connected with the glorious appearing of the great God, our Saviour; and could unfold them, with the fullest revelation of all that now seems so perplexingly obscure—and though you could boast "all knowledge" of those very things, which are not known even to the angels of God, in the future history of Jehovah's intended dispensations and dealings with our earth, and *yet*, with all this magnificent combination of supernatural gifts, beyond what ever was vouchsafed to mere mortal man, yet had not charity, you would be *nothing*! Nothing—in the eyes of that God, who is love! Nothing, on which He would look, with a momentary glance of satisfaction—nothing, in whose companionship He could rest, with a momentary feeling of delight!

And should not this awaken a holy jealousy in your bosom, lest you should have hitherto overvalued clearness of speculative views, and correctness of speculative knowledge, on the subject of unfulfilled prophecy; and too much slighted that spirit of Christian love, which the voice of God has pronounced so much more precious in His sight? Should not this jealousy be awakened, when you reflect, that even with the imparted gift of prophecy, without the

infused spirit of love, you would be but like Balaam of old; so that when the Saviour appeared in His glory, you should see Him, but not near—you should behold Him, but not nigh!

And oh, what would it profit you to prophesy, even with the infallibility of inspiration, concerning Messiah's glory, if in that glory you were to have no share?

Combine with the passages, thus presented to our view, those memorable words of the Redeemer, which ought to be treasured up in the innermost recesses of every believer's heart, and traceable, in living characters, on every outward movement of his life.

"By *this* shall all men know that ye are my disciples—if you have love one to another."

Not, observe, if you have perfect unanimity of speculative judgment on every point. Oh, no—the loving Saviour's test, by which His disciples should be known, was one infinitely more characteristic of His own spirit—more deeply stamped with the impress of that image, which all His faithful followers, to be conformed to Him, must bear—more sweetly breathing of that love, which nailed Him to a cross, for the salvation of His people—more clearly evidential of the divine origin of His religion, proving, with unquestionable demonstration, that it descended from Heaven, and that its Author is He, whose nature and whose name is "Love."

"If ye have *love*, one to another" Sweet badge of discipleship! Oh, were it indeed worn by all the

Christian brotherhood, it would go far to make this world to them a very type, and their communion together a very antepast, of Heaven.

Look yet again at the Redeemer's intercessory prayer, recorded in the 17th chapter of St. John—a prayer, which, more almost than any other part of Scripture, throws open to our view that sanctuary of mercy, the Saviour's heart—and permits us to look down into the depths of divine love for His peculiar people, which are to be found there.

Now what is a primary object of that intercessory prayer? What, at such a time, engrosses most of His thoughts, solicitude, and supplication, when pouring out His heart before His Father in Heaven?

Hear it from Himself—and may the blessed result of what you hear be henceforth, for ever, legible in your lives!

“Neither pray I for these alone—(His beloved apostles,) but for them also, which shall believe on Me through their word, that they *all* may *be one*, as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they all may be one in us; *that* the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me!”

Now mark the time that prayer was offered—the same night He was betrayed—when the hour of his agony and death was drawing nigh!

Mark the object, chosen to illustrate the union of all His people in one—even the perfect union of harmony and love, subsisting between the Father and Himself.—Mark, too, the result He anticipates from

the exhibition of this union, as evidencing the divine original of His religion—"that the world may believe that thou hast sent Me!"

When you combine all these together, can you, for one moment, doubt, what place the cherishing and exhibition of brotherly love, and Christian unity, among the members of His mystical body, holds in the Redeemer's estimation?

Can you wonder, when you survey the history of the church of Christ in every age, or look at its picture in our own, that from the want or weakness of an evidence for its divine original, to whose full display He looked for such glorious results, His religion should, as yet, have made, comparatively, so little progress upon earth?

And must you not feel convinced, that it must deeply displease the Saviour, to see the question of His second advent made an occasion or pretext for defacing the impression of *that image*, which He has selected, as the mark by which His disciples should be known; breaking the bonds of *that union*, which He has shadowed out by *such* an illustration; and impeding the advancement of *that object*, for which He pleaded, with such peculiar earnestness, at such an affecting time.

Seeing, then, that this divine principle of holy love is thus exhibited, as the living soul of the whole system of divine truth, (for as the body without the spirit is dead, so is orthodoxy of doctrine, without Christian love, dead also;) seeing that it is set forth, as the fulfilling of the law—the glory of the

gospel—the fruit of the Spirit—the foretaste of Heaven—the evidence of adoption—the badge of discipleship—the essence of the divine nature—the stamp of the divine image—the inseparable attendant of God's dwelling in us, and the indispensable qualification for our dwelling in God—the object of the most earnest apostolical exhortations and appeals—and the burthen of the prayer, that burst from the Redeemer's heart, not many hours before its blood was poured out for our redemption—Oh! how intense should be the desire, how fervent the supplication, how unwearied the efforts, of all who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity and truth, to promote an object, which we have seen to be *so precious* in His sight, and from whose full accomplishment He anticipated such glorious triumphs for His gospel. And, when engaged in the discussion of the nature of the millennial reign, how earnestly should his people pray to be enabled to carry it on, in *such* a spirit, as can alone be acceptable to Him, whose reign (to be conformed to the character of its King,) must pre-eminently be a reign of universal harmony, peace, and overflowing love.

CHAPTER XIII.

ADDRESS TO ANTI-MILLENNARIANS.

I would now address myself to those beloved fellow-Christians, whose views are opposed to what is usually designated the millennarian scheme—and who regard the Redeemer's predicted reign, during the thousand years, as exclusively spiritual; interpret the first resurrection of the saints, spoken of in Rev. xx. 4, as a revival of the spirit of martyrs, and faithful witnesses for Jesus, which will distinguish the millennial dispensation; and do not expect the Saviour's second advent, till after that dispensation, and the succeeding short interval of Satan's revived influence upon earth, shall have closed; when they believe that the general resurrection, both of the righteous and the wicked, and the final and universal judgment, will take place; and all God's dispensations towards the children of men, connected with this earth, shall terminate in the gathering together of all the Redeemer's ransomed flock into His heavenly fold, to abide there, for ever, with their Almighty Shepherd, rejoicing before Him with joy unspeakable, and full of glory—and the everlasting

exclusion of all the impenitent from the presence of the Lord, and shutting them up, in the prison-house of hell, with the devil and his angels, to be there tormented, in the lake of unquenchable fire, for ever and ever !

It would be superfluous to repeat to you, my beloved friends in Christ, the observations which, in all Christian faithfulness and love, I have addressed to my dear millennarian friends, so far as the spirit of those observations is equally applicable to you, as to them.

The only additional caution I would desire to subjoin, is, never to forget, that though millennarian views have very frequently been embraced by individuals of heretical opinions, or enthusiastic imaginations, there is no *necessary* connection between such views, and either the errors of heresy, or the extravagancies of enthusiasm. So far from this, they have been embraced and advocated, in our own day, by several Christians, eminently distinguished for the soundness of their doctrinal creed, and the soberness of their scriptural piety, no less than their fervent zeal for the Saviour's glory, and the entire devotedness of their time, and talents, their hearts and lives, to the advancement of His cause.

Need I do more, in confirmation of the truth of this assertion, than glance at the names of Bickersteth, and Haldane Stewart, of Noel, and M'Neile ?

Do not, then, allow millennarianism, (in the sense in which such men hold it), to be identified in your mind, with heresy, enthusiasm, or indifference to-

wards our scriptural church. I do not believe she has more attached friends, or warmer advocates, as she certainly has not more devoted ministers, in her communion, than these faithful, pious, and zealous servants of God!

Shrink, therefore, from all prejudiced feelings against views, which *such men* have embraced—and never think, much less speak or write, concerning opinions, which *such men* advocate, as if they were opposed to all sound and sober-minded interpretation of scripture, and were only to be regarded, as the dreams of a heated imagination, dazzled and bewildered by the splendor of prophetic visions, and the mystic obscurity of the language, in which they are conveyed!

Whenever you approach the investigation of this subject, let the names of such men shield the system, which the Holy Spirit has led or permitted them to embrace, from either censure or contempt.

Weigh its pretensions, dispassionately, in the balance of an impartial judgment, regulated by the force of scriptural testimony, and removed equally from partiality or prejudice, which alike pervert the faculties of the mind, present every object through a distorted medium, and so prevent the enquirer from arriving at a fair and honest interpretation of the statements of the word of God!

And even when firmly convinced, after such an examination, that the balance of scriptural testimony preponderates in favor of the views you have so long cherished, never lose sight of the *fact*—the *undeniable*

fact—that the opposite system *may be* eventually proved, by the result, to be the scriptural one ; and therefore scrupulously abstain from any such expressions, with regard either to the system, or its advocates, as would fill your heart with deep sorrow, in the retrospect, should the result prove that what you have, in pardonable ignorance and error, opposed, was agreeable to the oracles of divine truth, and exhibited the mind of the Spirit, and the purposes of God !

There is indeed another perverting influence, against which you must especially watch and pray, if you really desire to form an honest conclusion, in this momentous matter—I mean the bias of undue prepossession in favor of the system, to which, from your earliest years, you have been attached—which has been incorporated with the whole body of your religious sentiments and feelings—twined round your dearest and most cherished religious associations—blended with your sweetest spiritual hopes, and joys, and consolations—and endeared, and, as it were, almost hallowed, by the remembrance of affectionate and happy communion with beloved friends in Christ, some of whom perhaps are now with Him, and you almost feel as if it were wounding to their memories, to question the truth of those views, which so often refreshed and gladdened their spirits and yours, when you used to take such sweet counsel and converse together, touching the things that concerned your eternal peace !

To prevent this prepossession—(which in some

minds is of a peculiarly powerful nature,)—from exercising an undue influence over the feelings, and thus incapacitating the faculties for forming an unprejudiced judgment—to rise superior to the attractions and entanglements of deep-rooted convictions, and long-cherished associations—to be willing to renounce what we have fondly clung to for years ; and to tear away what is closely twisted round every fibre of our mental frame—to confess that we ourselves, and many of those whom we have loved, with the tenderest Christian love, have been mistaken in our views, on a subject which we have so carefully investigated, and so warmly advocated ; and to be ready to embrace opinions, against which we have so often entered our deliberate protest ; all this is a task of such peculiar difficulty to some minds, (from their peculiar temperament, both as to tenaciousness of opinion, and tenderness of feeling, that when it is accomplished, and a hearty readiness is produced to bow, with cheerful acquiescence, to the authority of Scripture, (no matter what relinquishment of favourite opinions, what sacrifice of darling prepossessions, it may demand,) we then behold one of the most splendid triumphs of the grace of God !

This paramount reverence for the authority of the written word—this cordial willingness to yield, with unquestioning submission, to its decisions, (*whatever* they may involve,) and to follow, with unhesitating steps, (*wherever* it may lead,) is a state of mind, for which you should pray, with especial fervour, if you would enjoy the satisfying conviction, that in opposing

the peculiar opinions of the millennarian scheme, you are *not*, (at least with culpable continuance in error,) opposing the will and word of God!

If, after an investigation, conducted in *such* a spirit, your present views remain unchanged, you will then have the comfort of feeling, that you have done all that was in your power, (as far as means are concerned,) to arrive at a knowledge of the truth; and your long-cherished opinions, additionally endeared by this fresh trial of their scriptural claims, will impart to your soul a satisfaction, which they neither can, nor ought to yield, so long as a reasonable doubt must hang over your mind, whether, from neglect of an impartial examination of the arguments, and scriptural proofs, adduced by your opponents, you may not be clinging, (through the blinding influence of prepossession,) to voluntary error, and contending against the purposes and promises of God!

But, however deepened may be your conviction of the truth of your views, as you cannot (any more than your opponents,) prefer any admissible claim to infallibility, ever, I conjure you, keep in remembrance the *possibility* that you may be wrong; and, therefore, do not spend, or rather waste, your time and talents, in labouring to prove, that the day of the Lord *must be* far distant, when it *may be* nigh at hand, even at the door! Beware of saying anything, that must necessarily tend to deepen the dangerous repose of a slumbering church—or a sleeping world! Be assured, those views can neither be right in themselves, nor inculcated to right purposes, which, by

seeking to establish the *impossibility* of the speedy or even sudden appearance of the Lord from Heaven, would weaken the force of His own solemn warning, grounded on the uncertainty of the time of His second advent—" *Watch*, for ye know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of man shall come !"

Never forget the strong presumptive argument* for the pre-millennial advent of our Lord, which these words, if admitted to refer to His second coming, supply ? And when we look to the 30th verse of the chapter, from which they are taken, (Matt. xxiv.) must we not see the strongest reason to conclude, that the coming of the Son of Man, spoken of in that verse, is *not*, (as some commentators have supposed,) His providential coming, in His power to destroy Jerusalem, but His promised personal advent, when He shall come in His glory, and shall sit upon the Throne of His glory ? Is not this the interpretation, which can alone suit the grandeur of the language, employed in that verse ; and give full force to the Redeemer's exhortations to constant watchfulness, as well as to the illustrations He employs, to image the suddenness and unexpectedness of the day of His appearing—comparing it to a snare—a thief in the night—the lightning-flash.

In guarding, therefore, against the one extreme, into which many in our day are prone to run, even an unwarrantably *confident* expectation of the Redeemer's immediate appearance, producing a feverish

* See page 190.

state of feeling, very unlike that sober spirit of patient waiting for Christ, which the Apostle recommends, take good heed that you are not betrayed into the opposite extreme, of placing the near approach of the Redeemer's second advent, so *completely* out of the sphere of warranted anticipation, as to withdraw almost entirely the believer's attention from this glorious event, by throwing it back at such a remote distance from his view, as must tend to deaden the desires, and damp the hopes, he should always cherish in connection with the promised appearing of the Son of God ; and thus, impair the efficacy of those practical influences, which we have endeavoured to show, will always emanate, to a child of God, from the habitual, devout contemplation of an event, with which all his brightest hopes of eternal happiness are linked !

If the feeling of the possibility of our Lord's manifestation, at no distant period, (in whatever manner, as to some of its subordinate circumstances, that manifestation may be made,) be unquestionably favorable to the maintenance of a state of habitual watchfulness, and readiness for His appearance, and if it be incontrovertibly certain, that no interpretation of Scripture, which can be put forward as *infallibly true*, can prove the impossibility of our Lord's coming, at any day, or hour, that is passing over our heads, then surely no faithful servant of His ought to speak of His advent as not to be looked for, till hundreds of years hence, with such a measure of *confident assurance*, as Scripture cannot be shown to war-

rant. Because he may thus be exerting his influence, to prevent the very state of feeling on this subject, in which the Saviour seems to have so earnestly desired His people to be constantly preserved—even a state of uninterrupted vigilance, arising from the uncertainty of the time of His appearing, which could not be consistently maintained, if it could be proved to be *indisputably certain*, that the Saviour was not to appear for hundreds of years—for how, then, could a Christian of our day constantly watch, in expectation of an event, which he knew *could not* happen till centuries after he had departed from this earth.

The great object, confessedly, that a faithful Christian should be above all things, solicitous to accomplish in this matter is, that his statements should so harmonize with those of the word of God, that no view he puts forward should, in the least degree, militate against any state of feeling, or temper of mind, which there is a manifest and expressed desire of the Saviour that His people should abidingly maintain!

I cannot in this view, conceal my apprehension, that there is a danger, lest those sincere Christians, in our day who are opposed to the millenarian scheme, should, when speaking on these subjects, be led to expressions, whether in public or private ministrations, which, (on the supposition that the second advent of our Lord is rapidly drawing nigh,) may be rather calculated to lull their hearers into a state of dangerous security, and unpreparedness for

the event, than to rouse them into one of awakened vigilance, and habitual preparation !

Whenever, therefore, you are tempted to abstain from allusions to the approaching advent of the Son of God, as a powerful motive, for urging the sinner to flee at once from impending destruction to the only Saviour, or as an object of gladdening and elevating anticipation to the believer, quickening his zeal, and sustaining his spirit, with the animating hope of the glory about to be revealed—whenever, I say, you are tempted to turn away from the glorious theme, because it has been mixed up by many, in our day with such frightful heresies, or absurd assumptions, or enthusiastic dreams, imagine you hear the voice of scripture sounding in your ears the solemn expostulation—

“ What, if others have thus perverted the truth, or mixed it up with fables ! what is that to thee ?

“ *Follow thou Me !*”

And, surely, if you will glance back at the opening part of this little work, and survey the scriptural testimonies, there adduced ; you must feel convinced that you cannot be said to *follow Scripture* on this subject, if you do not give to the second coming of the Son of God a strongly-marked prominence, in your system of divine truth and teaching ; as the blessed hope, on which the believer’s eye should be continually fixed in faith and desire—to stimulate him to the most unwearied exertions in the Saviour’s service ; that, thus, his blood-bought crown of glory may shine, with resplendent lustre, in the day of

Christ's appearing—to keep him in a constant habitude of holy preparation of heart and life, as not knowing the day, or hour, when his Lord may come—and to comfort him, amidst all his trials and tribulations, whether arising from persecution, or any of the manifold sources of sorrow, of which our world is overflowing full, by the cheering prospect of the everlasting joy and gladness, that shall rest upon him (both as to his glorified body and glorified spirit,) when the Lord he loves shall come in His glory, to fill him and all his fellow-saints, with the fulness of joy, in the presence of a Saviour-God, in that promised day of the full glory of the Church triumphant, when all its glorified members, the multitude which no man could number, shall be assembled round the Redeemer's throne ; and, while casting their crowns, in grateful adoration, at His feet, shall all unite their voices in that everlasting song of joyful praise—
“ Unto Him that loved us, and hath washed us from our sins in His own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God, even the Father, be glory and honour, and blessing, and power, for ever and ever !
Amen ! and Amen !”

CHAPTER XIV.

CONCLUDING ADDRESS.

READER ! who hast travelled so far in company with me—I cannot say farewell, without offering you a few parting words of affectionate advice, which I earnestly pray God to accompany with His blessing to your soul !

What may be your rank, condition, or circumstances, I know not ; whether your lot is cast among the high-born, or the humble in society—whether riches or poverty is your portion—whether your path through life is bright with the sunshine of earthly happiness, or overshadowed with the gloom of earthly sorrow—all this, reader, is unknown to me ; but one thing I know, concerning you, in comparison of which these distinctions are the veriest trifles—you are a traveller to eternity—an heir of immortality—an immortality, (oh, most awful thought !) either of inconceivable bliss or woe ; and, therefore, as a fellow-immortal, I cannot but feel deeply interested in your eternal welfare !

What, too, may be your religious views or character

I know not; but as I think it most improbable that a professing infidel would read this little work, I feel myself warranted in assuming, that I may address you as a professing Christian!

A professing Christian! Oh, what a tremendous weight of responsibility—including consequences of *infinite* importance, that will extend through *everlasting ages*—do these two words involve!

Give heed unto me, I solemnly conjure you, and may God, by His Holy Spirit, dispose you to lay my words seriously to heart.

As a professing Christian, you profess to believe, that He, “who in the beginning was with God and was God,” and by whom all things in heaven and earth were made, was Himself, in His love for you, and to accomplish your salvation, made flesh; and that He tabernacled on this earth as a Man, even a Man of Sorrows, for your sake—submitting to poverty, that you might be made eternally rich—to humiliation, that you might be exalted to eternal glory—to the most agonizing sufferings, that you might rejoice with everlasting joy—to an accursed death, that you might inherit everlasting life!

You profess to believe, that by this sublime display of self-sacrificing love, the Son of God has earned an unquestionable right, as your Redeemer, in addition to that which inalienably belonged to Him, as your Creator, to be enthroned in your heart, as the object of its supreme affections, and that His glory should be the paramount aim of your whole life—a rightful claim on whose undivided devotedness to

His service He has purchased, at the costly price of his own blood !

* You profess also to believe, that He exhibited, in His character, all the perfections of the Godhead, softened down to human apprehension, by being manifested in the person of One, who was “ found in fashion as a man,” a perfect participator of every essential attribute, every sinless infirmity, of human nature—that thus He left you an example, that you should follow His steps, walking even as he walked ; having the spirit of Christ ; putting on the Lord Jesus ; and being, in all things, conformed to the image of the Son of God !

You profess, further, to believe, that this same blessed Being, who, above eighteen hundred years ago, died on the cross for your redemption, is now seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, where He ever liveth to make intercession for you ; and that He will come again, (perhaps very soon—certainly what, in the light of eternity, may be called, coming quickly,) to be seated on a great white Throne—a Throne of judgment—to call *you*, as one of His professing servants, before that judgment-seat ; to require from you an account of the talents He has entrusted to your charge, that they should be employed for His own glory ; and according to the result of that solemn investigation, to pass on you a final irrevocable sentence, the consequence of which will be, *either* your inheriting a kingdom of eternal glory, *or* being cast into the lake that burneth with fire *unquenchable*.

All this is involved in your being a professing Christian. Whether you really believe all this, is known only, perhaps, to your own heart, and the heart-searching God; but by the simple fact that you are not a professing infidel, you stand forth, before man and God, a professing believer in the truth of all I have asserted, and from the consequences, the eternal consequences of this profession, you can never escape.

You may have never given the subject one hour's serious consideration—but this does not, in the smallest degree, alter the state of the case, or diminish, to the amount of a single atom, the weight of tremendous responsibility that is lying upon you, and which you *cannot shake off*; as your forgetfulness of the *obligations*, in which you are involved by the profession of Christianity, cannot induce a corresponding forgetfulness, on the part of God, or a relinquishment of His righteous claims to the supreme—yea, the entire devotedness of your time, talents, soul, body, heart, and life.

Let me, then, dear reader, ask you, in all Christian faithfulness and affection, a few plain simple questions, growing out of this view of the case.

Honestly speaking, do you really love the Saviour? Glancing back at what you profess to believe of His love for you, you will, I am sure, admit He has strong claims on your love—your grateful love. Do you feel *any* towards Him? Any *such* feelings as you would not be ashamed to call love, if an earthly

friend were the object, to whom they were offered? Surely you cannot think of offering *Him less*!

Do you, then, in any rational sense of the words, love the Saviour? Do you feel any pleasure in thinking of Him—in meditating on all you profess to believe He has done and suffered for you—in speaking *of* Him, to those who love Him—in speaking *for* Him, to those who do not know His worth—or speaking *with* Him, through the medium of His word, and prayer? And do you hate sin, for His sake, with a cordial, an uncompromising, an unconquerable abhorrence? Are His sufferings the exclusive ground of your hope of pardon?—His righteousness, the alone claim you prefer for your justification?—His merits, the only worthiness of which you make mention, or in which you trust?

Really and truly, is His glory your first and dearest aim, in all your plans and purposes? As the Lord liveth, can you honestly say, it is your chief desire and delight to live to Him, who died for you? Are you faithfully and zealously employing all your talents, for the advancement of His cause? and do you gladly feel, and by your expenditure of time, and money, and all your resources, shew that you rejoicingly remember, that you are not your own, for that *He* has bought you, and all that is yours, with His own blood?

And is your character, both as to its inward principles and outward developments, so far, at least, conformed to His, that the eye of God can see in your

soul, and the eye of man in your conduct, the divine lineaments of the Saviour's image, faintly, indeed, traced, perhaps, but still so unquestionably bearing the stamp of His features, that it is certain you must, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, have copied them from the character of the Son of God?

Are you *thus* privileged to cherish a scripturally warranted hope, that when the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and sit upon the throne of His glory, He will place *you* at His right hand, and welcome you to a participation of His own happiness, with that most blissful salutation—"Well done, good and faithful servant, enter *thou* into the joy of thy Lord." And having this glorious prospect of the blessedness that awaits you, in the day of Christ's second coming, are you of the number of those who "love his appearing;" and are looking, and longing for the day of his promised manifestation; so that when His voice seems, in the startling signs of the times, to sound in your ears the solemn announcement—"Behold! I come quickly," does your heart at once, with eager desire, glowing affection, and joyful anticipation, reply—"Even so; come, Lord Jesus! oh! come quickly, to bid sin, and sorrow, and suffering to cease; and establish Thy kingdom of righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost!"

If, reader, you can, with truth, answer these questions in the affirmative, a mortal voice is no more required to pronounce you blessed, than a mortal pen is equal to describe your blessedness.

The voice of the Holy Spirit, speaking in the

Scriptures, now declares—" *Blessed* art thou !" and the voice of God's beloved Son, speaking from the throne, will (perhaps ere long) ratify the Spirit's declaration, and invite you, as the blessed of the Father, to inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

I would only add, dear Christian reader, my fervent prayer, that each day, as it brings you nearer the possession of your heavenly inheritance, may find you advancing with rapid progress, in meetness for its high and holy enjoyments, continually growing in grace, and in the sanctifying knowledge of God our Saviour. Each day, may love to him, that divine plant, which the Holy Spirit has engrafted in your heart, strike root more deeply, and bring forth fruit more abundantly, even the fruits of righteousness and true holiness, to the praise of the grace of God. Each day, may your zeal for His glory burn with a brighter, a warmer, yet a steadier and serener lustre, more clearly evidencing its pure and purifying flame to be, light and heat from Heaven ; and while your peace-speaking trust in *His* righteousness is each day more untinged with any remaining leaven of dependence on your own, may every trace of conformity to His character be engraven with a deeper impress, and shine out with clearer manifestation, in every look, and word, and action, of your life. Fuller happiness, on earth, than this I cannot wish you ; fuller not even He Himself can give, till you shall see him, face to face, and in His presence find the fulness of joy for evermore.

But if, reader, you cannot with truth, answer the questions I have proposed, in the affirmative—if, whoever be the object of your supreme affections, it be not a Saviour-God—if, whatever be the first, the paramount aim of your solicitude, and pursuit, it be not His glory—if, whatever be the ground of your dependence for salvation, it be not exclusively His merits—if, whatever be the natural or moral attractiveness of your character, it be not, in all its features, modelled after *His*—then, no matter how esteemed, or flattered you may be in the world, or in the circle in which you move; no matter how loved, yea, or even idolized in the home, where your heart is treasured up; I would most solemnly, yet most affectionately, warn you, that, if the Scriptures be the word of God, your state is one of fearful—of imminent peril!

The sentence of eternal condemnation is passed against your soul! The sword of divine justice, suspended by the frail thread of your fragile existence, is hanging over your head!

All your past sins, every thought, every desire, every word, every action of your past life, opposed to the holy will and word of God, all are registered against you, in the book of God's remembrance—fearfully aggravated by the appalling charge, which stamps on them all the brand of the deepest, the most inexcusable guilt—"contempt of Jesus—contempt of His love—contempt of his sufferings—contempt of His blood!"

That blood is crying out to Heaven for vengeance

against you! Crying out to Him who will not allow His dear Son's blood to cry to Him in vain!

Oh! believe me, whatever shall be the terrors of Jehovah's wrath, when He shall arise, in all the majesty of the insulted Lawgiver, to avenge the quarrel of His broken law, they will be mildness itself, compared with the terrors of His wrath, when He shall arise in all the indignation of the angry Father, to avenge the quarrel of the blood of His well-beloved Son!

This—this is the vengeance hanging over you! *this* the wrath treasured up for you! the wrath of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ—incensed at the insults poured on his dear Son! all other wrath (I repeat it,) will be but as mercy compared to this!

And what is the prospect awaiting you, in the day of Christ's appearing, if you persevere, and perish, in your present state?

The awful answer is supplied, in the book of Revelation, where the veil is lifted off the visions of futurity; and the scene, that will be realized, when the Son of Man shall appear, is unfolded to our view.

“They said to the mountains and rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the Throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb—for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?”

Oh, day of unutterable terror to all, who have despised the salvation of the Son of God, and treasured up for themselves the *wrath of the Lamb*! There is something in those words, which strikes me as so

emphatically terrible, that I am almost led to pronounce them the most awful in the word of God.

And is there not much in the aspect of the days in which we live, to arouse the most careless from their sleep of death, by the startling apprehension, how near may be the day, when all impenitent and unsanctified professors of the gospel shall know by dreadful experience, the full import of those terrific words, "*the wrath of the Lamb!*"

We presume not to speak, with unwarrantable confidence, on a subject, which (as we have before observed,) seems shrouded in intentional obscurity! But can we look around us, and not be struck with the conviction, that many of the signs, which are predicted, as characterising the last days, pre-eminently distinguish our own! They *may not be* the immediate precursors of our Lord's appearance—but who, with the word of God for his guide, will venture to declare, with confident assurance, that they *are not*?

In addition to the signs of the times, noticed before, are there not others strikingly impressive?

Does not prophecy appear rushing, with unparalleled rapidity, towards its fulfilment? Is not the angel of the apocalypse flying in the midst of Heaven, with the everlasting gospel in his hands? Has not the gospel, through the medium of its translation into every known language, been virtually preached, by its universal diffusion, among all nations? And are not the efforts of Satan, through the medium of Popery, and Socinianism, and rationalism and infidelity, to oppose the progress of the Saviour's cause,

characterized by an unprecedented degree of energy and malignity, as if he knew that his time was short, and that he must therefore concentrate all his strength, like the expiring efforts of a dying monster, to bruise the heel of that Almighty Conqueror, whose irresistible power, he feels with despairing rage, to be now crushing his head even to death. Is not the struggle between the principalities of light, and the principalities of darkness, going on, with such an unparalleled putting forth of power, on both sides, as seems to shew that it is hastening towards some eventful crisis? And seems there not thus a note of preparatory warning, sounding throughout the earth—"Behold the Bridegroom cometh!"—and does not a character of deepened solemnity thus gather round the impressive exhortation of the Saviour—"Watch, for ye know neither the day, nor the hour, when the Son of Man shall come!"

Should He suddenly appear, what, oh! what would be your feeling, on seeing Him coming in the clouds, and hearing the heavens and the earth fleeing away from before His face?

But admit that this event is far distant—that many an important prophecy remains yet to be fulfilled, before the Son of Man shall appear. Then would I remind you of a coming of His, which *cannot be far* distant—which may be nigh to you, even at the doors. Is not death His messenger—and have you any security that death may not summon you into His presence, even while your eye is passing over the page, on which these words are traced? Death may

come to you—(as it has to many) with all the suddenness of the lightning's flash—or it may come, with more lingering steps—but, unless the day of His appearing prevent, it *must* come *soon*, to usher you into the immediate presence of that very Saviour, whose love you have so long despised!

Oh what an interview, if you continue in your present state, will then take place between that despised Saviour, and your guilty soul! Earth supplies no language, adequate to describe its horrors.

If you had enjoyed uninterruptedly, while on earth, the concentration of *all* the happiness which *all* earth's votaries have ever yet enjoyed, and one drop of bitterness had never once been mixed in the intoxicating cup of earthly bliss, and the period of enjoyment had been protracted beyond the age of patriarchal longevity—yea, or for hundreds of thousands of years, *all this* would have been far too dearly purchased at the price of the agony, the horror, the despair, of that first moment of meeting between your lost soul, and the Saviour it despised!—and then to think of an *eternity*, made up of such moments; each succeeding one, surpassing in depth and intensity of anguish, all that have gone before.

The blood is chilled—the heart is sickened, at the very *thought* of *such* an eternity—and are you prepared to endure the reality?—are you resolved to make the experiment, whether there be such a place as hell, and whether its torments be, in very truth, eternal or not?

Have mercy, oh! have mercy on yourself, I conjure you, reader!—By all a Saviour's majesty and love!—by all His sorrows and sufferings; His agony and bloody sweat, His cross and passion—by all the terrors, and the glories, of the day of His appearing—by the unutterable joy of those whom He will place at His right-hand in that day, and the unutterable horrors of those whom He will place at His left—by the unfading crown of light, the eternal kingdom of glory, prepared for those who love the Son of God; and the everlasting chains of darkness, and prison-house of despair, prepared for those who despise Him—by all that is endearing in the love, and all that is terrible in the vengeance, of Almighty God—by all that is desirable in Heaven, and all that is dreadful in hell—or if there be any appeal more awful, or more affecting—by all these would I conjure you no longer to despise a Saviour's love—no longer to treasure up a Saviour's wrath; but now, even now, while He waiteth, in the astonishing patience of His long-suffering compassion, to be gracious, oh, come to Him, whose arms have been so long out-stretched to enfold you in their sheltering embrace!

Retire to your closet, and on your knees, pour out your heart before your offended God.—Supplicate, in an all-sufficient Saviour's name, pardon for all that is past—even a pardon purchased with His blood; and such supplies of the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, for the future, as will enable you to live to His glory on earth, in the fore-tasted enjoyment

of the fulness of bliss, reserved for those, who shall live with Him, in glory, in Heaven, even for ever, and ever, and ever!

And oh! thou Almighty Friend and Saviour of sinners! who, in pity to our fallen race, didst once descend from the throne of Thy glory, and visit our earth, in great humiliation, to offer up Thyself, as a sacrifice for our salvation—thou Divine Philanthropist, who, from that throne to which Thou hast returned, continually bendest on this earth, which was once Thine own dwelling-place, the ever-watchful eye of a Redeemer's love, lifting up unceasingly, on behalf of its inhabitants, the pleading voice of thine all-prevailing intercession—thou appointed Judge of all mankind, who art again to visit our world, appearing, at Thy second coming, in unutterable majesty, to take vengeance on all Thine enemies, but to glorify, even with the participation of Thine own glory, all Thy ransomed and regenerated people! Vouchsafe, in the boundlessness of Thy compassion, so abundantly to pour out the influence of Thy spirit from on high, that, as the day of Thy second advent, that day of inconceivable terror to Thine enemies, draweth near, multitudes of awakened sinners may flee unto Thee—the true Ark—that can alone shelter them from the coming deluge of divine wrath, which shall destroy, with an everlasting destruction, all who have not fled to Thee for safety and salvation!

May love to Thee, and trust in thy righteousness, and zeal for Thy glory, and devotedness to Thy service, be so established and increased, more and more,

in him who writes, and all who read—that looking forward, with joyful anticipations to the day of Thy promised manifestation, we may be enabled, from the heart, to offer up that sublimest of uninspired prayers, in which our scriptural church has taught us, while standing beside the grave of the faithful, who have fallen asleep in Thee, to breathe forth our souls in earnest supplications, that “it would please thee, of Thy gracious goodness, shortly to accomplish the number of Thine elect, and to hasten Thy kingdom—that we, with all those that are departed in the true faith of Thy holy name, may have our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in Thy eternal and everlasting glory!” Amen, and amen! Even so! Come quickly! Lord Jesus!

THE END.

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